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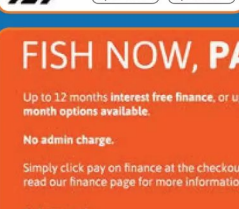
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WELCOME

ISSUE 595

APRIL 2021

MAIN THEME OF this issue is spring fishing for bass, which are becoming almost an all-year species in some regions. There have already been plenty of reports of fish from both the north and south of the country.

Well done particularly to a few lads in Northumberland who've been catching some, not just lone fish either. You can check out all the latest catches starting with our Mission competition (page 30).

We've also got some interesting interviews and stories from some leading anglers, two of whom are charter skippers. They are Kevin McKie (page 46) Gethyn Owen (page 50) and Roy Tapper (page 94) and they're more in common than you might think.

As always, we've got plenty of product information and reviews in this issue, including the new Anyfish Anywhere rods (page 82), so check out our tackle section starting on page 72.

At the time of writing it seemed March 29 would see the easing of Covid-19 regulations in England. That will mean the return of charter boat fishing and match fishing too. Extended travel could be permitted from April 12, which will benefit sea anglers living much further inland.

AMAZING FISH

It has been an interesting month since going to press with our last issue with one record-breaking fish and another that may have been a British best.

The record beating fish is Tommy Fraser's 9lb 5oz torsk. The 25-year-old from the Shetland Islands is submitting a claim for the vacant shore-caught record for the species, a member of the ling family. Tommy caught it on a Sidewinder shad from a rock mark at Luna. He's claiming a Scottish record too.

The torsk could find its way into the collection of the Natural History Museum to join other record fish in its archive, as well as specimens collected by Captain James Cook and Charles Darwin.

The second fish was a massive spurdog that registered somewhere between 24lb 8oz and 25lb 8oz when weighed on digital scales on a moving boat. Skipper Kev Sampson decided it was fractionally under



25lb, a few ounces short of breaking the British boat-caught record. Neither of them had any intention of retaining the fish.

The big spurdog, a first of the species for angler Dougal Martindale, was caught on squid bait and size 5/0 hook off the Isle of Wight on Kev's boat Devocan, out of Yarmouth. Dougal, from East Cowes, was close to beating Shane Salmon's 2017 record of 25lb 4oz, caught off Hastings. Bigger ones are out there, as demonstrated last year by Paul Westaway who caught and released a 27lb 3oz spurdog off Devon.

"Having never targeted or caught this species, I was happy that my first one very nearly beat the British record," said Dougal.

DECISIVE ACTION

While Greenpeace may be like marmite for some, its fight against bottom trawling and supertrawlers is something many do support. At the end of February it created an underwater barrier in a protected area of the English Channel about 28 miles south of Selsey Bill. It dropped 18 boulders, each weighing about three tonnes, from the Greenpeace ship Esperanza in the Offshore Brighton Marine Protected Area (MPA). This action closed off about 55 square nautical miles of the MPA (one fifth of the site's total area) from bottom trawling.

Greenpeace said it informed marine authorities of the location of each boulder to ensure navigational safety for other seafarers. In September, the organisation dropped boulders in the Dogger Bank conservation area of the North Sea.

Finally, I know I've said it before but it's worth repeating that your continued messages of support and praise for the magazine are really gratifying in these tough times. Many thanks.

Cliff Brown, Editor

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BASS AND THE BUFFET

PART 1:
READING
THE MENU

Being magnificent munching machines, bass aren't fussy and will eat almost anything, but the angler must know when to use a particular bait or lure





A bass caught on a fly



Squid can be very effective

BASS ARE DRIVEN BY INSTINCT, to eat as much as possible, grow as fast as possible, and breed as prodigiously as possible. They don't swim around wondering how to deal with fake news on the internet, when to clean the tadpole pond, or whether a three-ounce bomb weight's going to move around too much in a five-metre tide.

On the other hand when I am near the water I spend the majority of my time deep in contemplation. The reason I'm bald, I reckon, is that I've scratched my head so much. People sometimes say to me "You think like a bass." It's a compliment so I'd be churlish to tell them "You're wrong, fish don't think at all."

There is, however, one aspect of life where I have a lot in common with a bass. We're both opportunistic omnivores, magnificent munching machines. I'm a skinny so-and-so but I have a healthy appetite, and with very

few exceptions I'll eat anything. I don't care for goat's cheese, and my Scandinavian friends have yet to persuade me of the charms of lutefisk and pickled shark – both smell like flatulent seagulls after a night in a bad kebab shop. But those apart you can bring anything to the table and watch me get stuck in. Bass aren't fussy either.

When I keep a fish for the kitchen I check its stomach contents, and some I release spit up their last few meals. I've caught bass full of tiny jelly-fry, whitebait, sandeels, small to medium mackerel, heads and frames of bigger mackerel, weed maggots, finger mullet, prawns, squid, lugworms, ragworms, razor clams, mussels, crabs, pilchards, rockling and whiting.

Less commonly I've come across sand-smelts, pollack, wrasse, weevlers, cuttlefish, garfish, little congers, and flatties up to about 10 inches long. One-off discoveries include a small ray, a mouse, a four-ounce brown trout, a bird the size of a wagtail, the head of a decent codling, a juvenile lobster, and a baby dogfish. I saw a three or four-pounder grab a pork sausage dropped from a harbour wall. It's clear that a bass, like myself, will eat just about anything edible.

BINGE EATING

I have a theory that bass lock in on a specific prey species when it is abundant, and that they'll take this local and seasonal delicacy more readily than anything else. They're single-minded binge-eaters, I think, like the professional gannets who win prizes by putting away a whole beef brisket or fifty hotdogs in an hour. I've come to this belief through experience: try one lure or bait and the wave seems as dead as well hung mutton, switch to something and the bites are non-stop. When the whitebait, jelly-fry, sandeels, or finger mullet are swarming, the



Crab is a good bait but does attract smaller bass

fish I catch on flies and lures are full of just one thing. And as autumn storms dump mackerel, pilchards, squid, mussels or razor clams on to my beaches, bass seem to forget about a balanced diet. They stuff themselves with a single source of nourishment.

The lesson I draw from this really is common sense. Work out what they're eating right now and you'll catch more bass. But in fishing, as in life, there is a gulf between common sense and common practice. I run into people monogamously committed to a single fly, lure, or bait, using it in sickness or in health, in early spring or in late autumn, in still clear water or in churning coloured gunge. Fly-casters with Clousers or Deceivers, lure-fishers with Patchinkos, Senkos or Fiiish Black Minnows, the bait brigade with lugworms, ragworms, sandeels or peeler crabs.

"The fish just love it," they say. "I had two six pounders in under an hour." Which shows only

that on one mark over one tide the bass went well to that offering. Investment fund managers warn – sometimes in small print – that past performance is no guarantee of future results. True of bass as well. They may have been all over a popping plug on the north coast last week, but as to what they'll take best here and now, well who really knows?

See me grabbing a quick lunch and you might decide I adore pasties. I do, I'm Cornish, but my local does a great hamburger and there's a café where the chicken shawarma's out of this world; I wouldn't look twice at a pasty in either of those spots.

FINDING CLUES

So how can you work out what the bass are eating at any given time and place? In my neighbourhood at least, the season provides pointers. In spring I run into weed maggots after the winter storms have settled, finger mullet

nibbling on them. Early summer can be the time for jelly-fry about an inch long, and for prawns and sandeels. High summer brings tourists who scatter the beaches with dropped sandwiches, flip-flops and spilled ice creams, which the bass ignore as they concentrate on whitebait and mackerel. In autumn the squid show up in numbers. And a late-season blow can cover the beaches with the likes of pilchards, mussels, and razor clams.

Worms and crabs are around almost all year, but I rarely use them as bait these days because they attract too many tiddlers. Bigger bass tend to swallow them, which makes for tricky releases; and although I'm happy to keep a fish to eat, I'd hate to kill a bass just because my hook was too small.

Another way to learn what's on offer is to look. That sounds obvious, but a lot of fishers don't do it. Instead they glue their eyes to their lure, fly or rod-tip with the monomaniac focus of a toddler leering at the supermarket sweet counter. This when just a glance at the water might tell them what the bass are after.

SOLVE A PROBLEM

Take the July morning when I was on a local surf beach. Well, it's a surf beach when there's been a spot of weather. This morning it was just a beach, a puny ripple lapping at the tideline, but on that tideline the ribbons of weed were dotted with silvery corpses of whitebait stranded on the sand.

There were several foxes scuttling up and down the sand, tucking into the fish breakfast. The shallows were speckled with swirls and splashes as little bodies jumped clear of the moonlit water. They were the size of a 20g Toby, so that's what I tried. No whoppers, but I had four bass in an hour, all within 20 yards of the water's edge.

Then an upcountry lure enthusiast showed up. He waded as far as he dared and started hurling something at the horizon. Amazing casts, long and graceful, but no fish. When he came ashore he showed me his gear. It's a common angling introduction, the equivalent of dogs displaying



Natural prey	Suggested lure or fly alternative to bait
Jelly-fry	A pale, silvery fly, size 2-6, such as Muddler Minnows
Weed maggots	A grub-shaped fly, size 6 or 8, like a Diawl Bach
Finger mullet	Anything the right size in black and silver, a plug or soft plastic
Prawns	A palmer-dressed fly, size 4-1/0, on a long-shank hook
Sandeel	A shad, a shallow swimmer, a skinny metal jig or a slim streamer fly
Whitebait	A large streamer fly or 20g Toby, silver and white being favourite
Mackerel	A shallow swimmer, such as the 135mm Maria Chase Angel Kiss
Squid	Cotton Cordell Pencil Popper, the back sinks in squid-like manner

* Flies can be fished on fly-tackle or on a dropper ahead of a lure if you prefer to stick with a lure rod.



The Toby lure is a proven fish taker



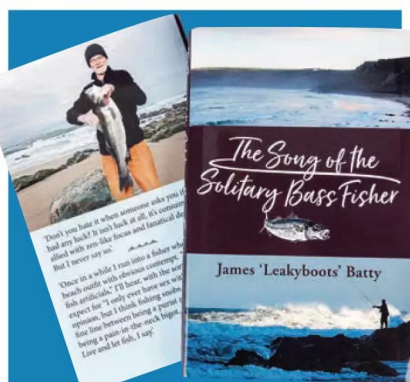
Work out what the fish are eating to get the best results

their bottoms to one other. He was using a silvery grey swimming plug 128mm long. It was a Tackle House Feed Shallow. I couldn't see any five-inch whitebait, so I gave the holidaymaker a spare Toby. He'd never seen one before. All his lures were large, Japanese, and expensive. He gave the little lump of metal a quizzical look, but he was game enough to put it through its paces; and he was into a bass right away.

Then there was a mid-October outing in proper Cornish weather, a damp Force five wallowing in from the Atlantic. For several days in a row I'd landed decent bass on whole joey mackerel. Not today, nothing but a couple of little congers. I'm not sure of the cut-off point between a bootlace and a strap, but these were like skinny neck-ties.

As the first light began to glimmer in the east I felt a proper thump, a 2lb schoolie. I unhooked it in the shallows and watched as it spat out my joey, immediately followed by a couple of six-inch squid.

I often carry frozen squid as backup bait, along with razor clam. It re-freezes okay even if slightly thawed. I tied one on. I only wish my reserve supply had been bigger: four squid, four bass, the best an 11-pounder. ■



Read more from James Batty in his book 'The Song of the Solitary Bass Fisher' (£14.99), which is available from Merlin Unwin Books Ltd, Ludlow, tel: 01584 877456.

**NEXT MONTH: PART 2
FINDING THE
BUFFET TABLES.**

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THEIR FUTURE IN OUR HANDS

How a healthy alliance between anglers and scientists is helping to safeguard the future of an iconic species

CROUCHING LIKE A HUNTER keeping his profile low, Glen Wightman tenses and strikes. The bass swims deep before splashing to the surface. It is under 3lb but gives a good account of itself.

Immediately, he starts working with the fish on a mat, measuring it, recording the details and applying a tag. The fish is out the water for less than a minute before it is tasting saltwater again. He holds it lovingly for a moment and then with a waft of the tail it swims off carrying that vital little tag.

Only five minutes later Glen lands another fish. His fishing partner Kevin Crowley is working the same ground in close proximity but, apart from one follow, has no joy.

I quickly establish I'm wasting my time trying to keep up with Glen and still fish myself. He's like a mountain goat over the terrain consisting of small jagged rock pinnacles just big enough

for one person to stand on and surrounded by water. Clambering after him was a challenge to say the least.

The depth of water is maybe 10 feet on average with some kelp coming up off the bottom in places. Due to the bass seeming to want a lure just sub-surface, he's chosen one of his favourites, the IMA Komomo that features a sloping face and works about a foot down. However, by lifting the rod tip, the lure works more on the surface. I notice Glen alternating between fishing the lure a bit deeper and then on the surface to advertise its attraction better by creating some surface wake.

MAJOR PROJECT

Originally from California but now living in Ireland, Glen is no ordinary angler, but a research officer for Inland Fisheries Ireland and knows more than most about the Irish bass scene.

Over the past 14 years, not only has he worked on various major projects including fish tracking, estuary surveys and stream restoration, but also he's been involved in the National Bass Programme. I was introduced to Glen by friend and fisheries officer Kevin Crowley and the three of us were now spending a few hours rock hopping near Smerwick in County Kerry, the intention being to fish with plugs and to tag a few bass.

It is no surprise to discover that Glen is an obsessive angler. Growing up living next to the Sacramento River in California, his early trips were spent spinning for trout and striped bass. He lacked the gear to catch the big stripers but caught them to 6lb or so, which cemented his interest. A move upstate saw his fishing time taken up by the mighty steelhead and salmon. It's at this time he embarked on a career as a fish biologist.

In 2014 Glen was assigned to what was then the new IFI Bass Programme and he soon ►

Glen Whiteman ready to strike



Tag fitted, this bass is ready to return



realised he needed to understand and align with the anglers who were going to provide vital information. He chose to fish with lures as his way of introduction. By his own admission a few attempts were needed before he struck gold and caught his first bass. Glen has now joined the ranks of those who live and breathe bass and he fishes as often as time allows, which apparently is a lot.

The IFI Bass Programme was established to collate data to provide factual scientific advice and evidence to enable the better support management and conservation of Ireland's important bass resource. A key element of this strategy is to better determine the day to day and long-term stock levels of the species, as well as enhance the knowledge of bass with regard to their ecology and biology within Ireland. The ultimate aim is to better safeguard their long-term future.

Few realise that the bass is Ireland's only marine fish species that is currently managed purely for angling. Some anglers in the UK have campaigned for many years to get certain species classified as 'sport' fish to improve protection, but so far it has mostly fallen on deaf ears. Ireland though often leads the way on such matters. Good examples are its early introduction of a daily catch limit, a bass close season and restrictions on commercial bass fishing. It's no surprise to see these steps being taken with a long-term view.

BASS BENEFITS

Back in the mid-1980s I was fortunate enough to be asked to tag juvenile bass for the late, great Donovan Kelly. He was a man with a passion for the species, its history, biology and future preservation, as well as being the author of ground-breaking scientific papers.

The work done, mainly by Donovan and his army of dedicated taggers, set a foundation for awareness of bass in the UK and the realisation of the need to record them so they can be better protected in the future.

This work remains vital and no more so than in Ireland where bass are a major asset, producing an economic benefit through angling tourism from the UK, Europe and even America and Australia. Online figures suggest some 25 per cent of overseas sea anglers visiting Ireland go principally to fish for bass. Back in 2015 that equated to roughly 22,000 bass anglers.

When expenditure is taken into account, it is estimated that in 2019 bass anglers accounted for around €70 million directly injected into the Irish economy. That proves the importance of bass. As a comparison, other general sea angling contributed about €160 million annually. Domestically, there are about 11,000 Irish anglers who class themselves as primarily targeting bass.

When I was tagging regularly, we were referred to as taggers, but the more appropriate term of citizen scientist is used these days in Ireland. These people are dedicated bass anglers whose task is to record details of their catches, such as a fish's length, weight and



Another fish to be tagged

nearest town or county to where it was caught. It also involves removing no more than five scales from just under the rear edge of the pectoral fin to allow scientists to record the growth rates from the rings on the scales.

The most important job is to tag any fish caught so that future recaptures can be used to record migration. Data has to be accurately recorded and to do this the IFI introduced a plastic measurement mat to provide a safe base for the bass to be worked on safely. This mat is also used for the recording of specimen fish of any species. It was a major step forward and generally welcomed by the majority of anglers.

MORE KNOWLEDGE

Recaptures of tagged fish vary year to year for various reasons, such as the weather and availability of food. The current recapture rate is around 1.1 per cent. However, the



A bass on the official measuring mat



The tag includes a number and contact info

more bass that get tagged the quicker those recapture numbers will grow. That said, the actual recaptures may already be higher than originally thought. During 2019 there were 335 bass tagged by citizen scientists, with the grand total being 2,400 since the programme began in 2014.

Although the tags are bright yellow, apparently they quickly become covered with a green alga that can make them hard to spot especially in low light levels. The advice to anglers is to fully check along the base of the bass's second rear dorsal fin because, at first glance, some anglers have mistaken this as a thin strand of seaweed.

During the time I was tagging for Donovan, it was established that the majority of bass stayed within the locality where they were juveniles, typically within a few miles. The latest IFI findings suggest much the same, with 64 per cent of recaptured fish occurring within 10km (six miles) of the original tagging point. Fourteen per cent were caught again between 10km and 45km from the original tagging, with 21 per cent recaptured at distances more than 45km away.

Interestingly, one fish tagged in County Waterford was recaptured just 39 days later in Cornwall. A true wanderer in bass terms. This mirrors several of my own tagging efforts from the 1980s. One was a bass caught near Barmouth being recaptured in the Conway Estuary on the North Wales coast, and another in Cornwall's River Camel.

SPOTTING TRENDS

Other trends have come to light through the Irish programme. Analysis of scales provided by anglers has confirmed slow growth rates. This matches findings elsewhere, with the



exception of occasional Bay of Biscay fish that may migrate into our more southern waters and show a markedly faster growth rate. It hasn't been established if any of these fish make it into Irish waters.

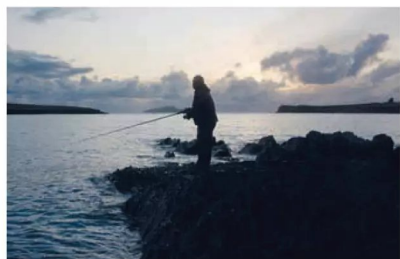
The Irish scale readings are also used to monitor strong recruitment in juvenile bass within specific year classes. Key estuaries are monitored on an annual basis to provide information on numbers of fish in each year class. After years where a higher proportion of juvenile bass survive, these fish start to appear four years later in anglers' catches and can then be further monitored using fish scales supplied by anglers.

This highlights the importance of the anglers in the collection of data for the programme, which will be ongoing for the foreseeable future due to the importance of bass in Ireland and their standing as an iconic angling species.

It's interesting to see the difference in the tags used nowadays too, compared to what we used way back in the 1980s. Then we were using Petersen tags, basically two orange plastic discs held in place by a stainless-steel pin. The modern approach is a thin, short length of plastic tubing with a T-shaped head. These are pushed into place using a canula and are far less cumbersome to the fish. Each yellow tag carries a clear individual tagging number, the website address (www.fisheriesireland.ie) and contact telephone number (+3531 8842600).

Although this information is gathered in Ireland, it is still relevant to what happens in the UK and helps us understand more about the life cycle of the bass overall when information is compared. The Irish bass that migrated to Cornwall raises a question Donovan Kelly and I discussed back in the 1980s – do bass also migrate between Ireland and Wales? Only future tagging will prove the point.

For those who care about the future of angling it is comforting to see such dedicated people working hard to preserve the fish we crave to catch, yet their efforts often go relatively unnoticed. People like Glen and his colleagues are in the forefront of bass research and conservation. They are paving the way for the long-term future bass fishing in Ireland and also the UK. ■



Glen used the deadly IMA Komomo lure

GET ON THE PROGRAMME

If any UK anglers catch a tagged bass, and a lucky few do, then record the tag number. Ideally, measure its length (nose to the fork of the tail), and ease out up to five scales from just under the tip of the extended pectoral fin. You only need give a rough idea of where you caught it, such as the nearest town or county. Email the information to bass@fisheriesireland.ie or phone the number on the tag.

In turn, you will get details of the original date and area the fish was tagged, its age, and length when tagged. It's a simple way to do our little bit to preserve Irish bass fishing in the future.

Irish anglers interested in contributing by recording detail and taking scale samples can find out more information by contacting the programme.

Go to: www.fisheriesireland.ie/Projects/national-bass-programme.html.

Importantly, those participating do not have to give specific mark information, just a general area is required, so no need to worry about revealing your mark.

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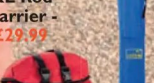
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IN THE LAP OF THE GODS

Many lure anglers hope April signals the start of their campaign, but the weather can make fools of us all

DOWN HERE IN CORNWALL we never quite know when the new bass fishing season is going to kick off, but there are two things I am convinced about. Firstly, I believe that the previous winter always has a bearing on seeing a late or early start and secondly that social media gives us an indication about when other parts of the UK and Ireland start to fish for bass.

It's good that so many anglers enjoy sharing details of their catches (be careful with precise locations) because it gives an interesting timeline of when different parts of our coastline switch on. I would also suggest that these days there are more anglers lure fishing for bass, and that those old rules about seasons have been disproved and discarded. I notice it with wrasse as well. Who'd have thought

even 10 years ago that you'd see reports of lure anglers out there in early January or the middle of March catching wrasse on soft plastics? An influx of anglers getting into lure fishing is driving this forward.

In Cornwall, we look forward to lure fishing in November and December because it can be very good for bass given the correct conditions. The fishing can go quiet early in the new year, but if the water does not get particularly cold I will hear reports of bass on lures earlier than I'd expect. Sometimes, a few anglers I know catch regularly all winter – but not in Cornwall.

Bearing in mind that I include January down here in the previous bass season, I think the earliest I had landed a bass on a lure in Cornwall was April 11, until 2019 when I landed one at 5am on April 2. I nearly fell off the rock I was standing on with excitement. That one bass told me it was now time to really go for it and get out fishing as much as possible.



Marl Quinton casts in hope and gets a 7lb 5oz bass (main image)



USE THE TECH

I live very near the sea and I go fishing a lot, but it changes nothing with regard to keeping a close eye on weather conditions, swell, winds, tides, and moon phases. Yes, I can visit my local coastline and estuary and see exactly how it is looking. Sometimes though, I will plan for a session because I particularly like either the size of the tide or when the high or low waters are scheduled. Whatever way I go about it, I need to have a good grasp of what it's like out there.

I am sure there are some anglers who can take a whimsical look at the sky and know exactly what the weather is going to do for the next month, but I choose to take advantage of mostly internet-based technology. Never before have we had so much easy access to useful information. The bass angler who doesn't check and understand this stuff is leaving too much to chance.

First you need a tide table. I always buy the little Yellow Publications' booklets that are already adjusted for British Summer time. I also have the free app TidesNearMe. I do use the BBC Weather app, but only for an idea of rain or sunshine because I don't really think its

wind forecasts are much use for sea anglers.

For an easy to read and understand wind forecast, try the free XCWeather app or its website. I also use the Magic Seaweed app or website for swell and wave forecasts, and there are loads of webcams of major surf spots where you can often get a good idea of the sea state and sometimes the water clarity.

Forecasting is what it is and never 100 per cent accurate, but the more you know your fishing spots and how they react to different weather patterns, the better you can make use of this information to reach an informed decision about where to go fishing.

EARLY SUCCESS

I remember a really good early season session for bass with my friend Mark Quinton. Living near the sea in south-east Cornwall means we can go fishing on the spur of the moment, but this one was different for various reasons.

For this session that went so well, I was looking at early Friday morning to go fishing because I really liked the tides – regular springs, not massive, new moon, and an early morning high water. We'd have gone fishing somewhere on those tides unless hellfire was ▶

being unleashed on Cornwall, but I first got an idea about where to go on the Tuesday before when I had a look at my tide table and then Magic Seaweed.

It the forecast was correct then things seemed right for a location in Cornwall where we have done well early in the season. My gut feeling was to head for this spot if the various forecasts remained favourable, but a number of times I have turned up and it's been unfishable. Conditions there have to be spot on, otherwise it is too dangerous.

Sometimes everything goes to plan. The winds were always forecast to be offshore, so I wasn't unduly worried about lots of weed or colour in the water, but what I needed was for the swell to stay just as forecast. Luckily it did.

We arrived to find the conditions as we'd like them, but were there any bass? When Mark hooked and landed a 7lb 5oz fish within 15 minutes I could hardly wipe the smile off my face. We both had some nice bass and I lost an absolute beauty when the hooks came out. Every single thing that needed to come together did so.

When it's still early April and you are not sure if there will be any bass, well sometimes you just have to jump for joy at a good result and store it all away in your fishing brain. When we finished fishing I gave a glance up to the fishing gods to say thank you.

If fishing is the act of us mere mortals trying to beat nature at her own game and often failing, how satisfying is it when everything comes together? ■

The bass fell to an Apia Dover 99F



SOFT PLASTICS FROM THE SHORE

Welsh bass guide Matt Powell looks at the basics of this exciting lure method



While lures should imitate the baitfish, its colour matters too

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN WE start to switch our minds to targeting bass again. After their winter spawning offshore, the fish begin to move into the stretches I fish on the Welsh coastline and soon there will be no better time to start fishing with soft plastic lures.

Spring and early summer are the perfect times to fish for those hopefully larger bass. Some questions should be at the front of your mind though. Basic things like what do bass eat? With soft plastics we are imitating soft baitfish and marine worms.

Releasing fish is important for the future



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Rods should have power, a good action and durability

LURES TO TRY

- Lunker City Slug-go
- OSP Do Live stick
- Albie Snax
- Megabass Dot Crawler
- Megabass Super X-layer
- Illex I-shad Tail
- Keitech Easy Shiner
- Hawg Wild Senko
- Gary Yamamoto Swimming Senko



A fine bass for Matt Powell

TACKLE CHOICES

You are looking at rods to do a specific task. Your choice needs to have power, a good action, the ability to put up with a lot of work, and be able to last in a saltwater environment.

Sensitivity is key. You should feel every touch and bump, while also able to tell the difference between a bass mouthing the lure or if it's the lure touching rocks or weed.

Most of the big-name companies produce bass lure rods. For the specialist stuff, look at rods from Tulala, Major Craft, Illex and Tenryu, which all have versions for lures from about 3g or 5g up to 20g-plus.

If you are setting out to target bigger fish, use lines that are strong enough to handle them. Do not skimp on your mainline or leaders because using inferior lines may cost you a fish. I always use good eight-strand braid such as Sunline Castaway or the YGK G-soul WX8, usually something in the range of 1.2PE to 2.0PE for work around reefs and rocks.

Leaders are very important with my choices being Seaguar Ace Hard or YGK Nitlon in anything from 12-20lb to avoid abrasion breaks. Sound knots need to be mastered too. I use an improved blood knot from leader to hook, and an Albright for leader to braid. I don't use lure clips on soft lures because I feel they hinder the action.

LURE SELECTION

There are so many lures that it is hard to know what to use. You need to play on the bass's predatory and opportunistic instincts. Lure colour is important but so are visual and olfactory awareness, vibrations and acoustics. Look, smell and sound are also important to the angler, so do not always rely on a fish's senses but trust your own too.

Think about what you are doing and particularly the baitfish you are trying to imitate. For instance, sandeels are soft and the same should apply to your lure. Baitfish are not moving around really fast, so think about how you are working a lure. Are you working the lure too much?

A weedless Texas-rigged Slug-go is always a winner. Takes with on the drop and soft needle techniques can be at very close quarters and amazingly visual. Weighted Texas and Carolina rigs are great but a weightless soft plastic is equally as deadly in certain situations. Rigging the soft plastic should be straightforward. I use a completely weightless or a weighted Texas or Carolina rig with anything from 3g up to 10g cone lead weights.

I have seen big fish come up to my hard lure and then turn away, so using a soft lure will give you the edge in many scenarios. I stick with lures of four and a half to six inches long. It is surprising how big lures can seem underwater and may be spotted from a surprisingly long distance. Sometimes try a size down because three-inch lures can be a great choice if conditions are calm or the water really clear. Of course, you will lose a soft plastic now and again.

TIMING, FLOW & CURRENT

The importance of the time of tide, tidal flow and current is everything. With the water being pushed and pulled into nooks and crannies, a bass uses its senses and the tide to its advantage.

Being a master of its environment, a bass will sometimes over-exert itself. In this context I have seen big fish swim up on to the rocks and to the edge of the final piece of wave on to sand to take a lure. Bass use the natural chaos to their advantage and baitfish stand no chance. Lure anglers are doing the same from a different perspective by trying to fool the bass into engulfing a lure.

There is no better way of catching fish consistently than by perfecting your lure techniques. The best advice is to put in some hard work and get to know your marks. There are no shortcuts to success. Finally, releasing and handling fish properly is an important technique to learn when we care about the fish we catch and the future of the species. ■



CASTING A METAL SPINNER, Dexter wedge or an Abu Toby from a pier wall or open rock mark is often an early experience for any sea angler. Easy to cast, robust and capable of searching huge amounts of water, these lures

prove to be successful time and time again.

It was my introduction into an active style of lure fishing and convinced me that the constant casting and moving would result in a big fish grabbing my lure at any moment.

Deep-water rock marks, piers or clean beaches are usually recommended for casting with metal lures. Yes, metals sink quickly and are vulnerable to getting snagged on rough

MIXING IT WITH METALS

**There is no need for lure anglers
to avoid rough ground says
Kernow Lure Fishing's Jack Beesley**

ground but many lure anglers are reaping the rewards of fishing in areas that may have been avoided before. Places such as shallow water with areas of rough ground.

Being curious about this idea, I started using slimmer, sleeker metals over areas of shallow water during my fishing in Cornwall. I could adjust how I used the lure to make it work on the mark. After many repeated sessions, I learned to alter the jig speed and retrieval rate accordingly, which led to an increase in catches as well as avoiding most tackle losses.

WHERE & WHEN

The depth of water and seabed terrain are key to increasing your catch rate and helping you to avoid snags. Researching your chosen area provides knowledge ahead of your session, while keeping a record of what works in certain conditions on a particular day helps you repeat any success. An added bonus of

knowing the seabed topography is you can recall the areas that are hotspots.

Useful features to look for are areas of shallow rough ground that have strong water movement, either on the flooding or ebbing tide. Any gullies and reefs provide shelter for the baitfish until they have to move, which is when predators take advantage. Contrasting areas of dark seaweed, sand and rock and the clear areas of sand are great places for predators to ambush smaller prey.

Fishing on the edge of tidal rips leading on to reefs can be beneficial too. Strong current carries smaller baitfish and placing a slim metal lure in the flow can get a bite. Using metal lures on the edges of tidal races or currents definitely works too, and in rougher seas you can impart a better action.

As ideal conditions go, I prefer a medium swell and decent water clarity. I'm in business when this combines with an overcast sky and onshore wind that causes a slight chop on the water. Any movement in the water is beneficial to the predator, disorientating prey and making them more vulnerable. However, when the sea is too calm and clear, mackerel and garfish may be obliging but bass may turn away if given time to inspect a lure. Switching to a realistic soft plastic or hard lure may be more successful in such conditions.

TACKLE & LURES

For my line, I use 20lb J-Braid X8 to give me maximum casting distance and sensitivity. I add a Berkley 20lb fluorocarbon leader to protect against abrasion. My reel is a Penn Slammer 3500 on a 9ft Savage Gear MPP2 rod. The reel has the cranking power to jig heavy lures in large seas while remaining sealed against saltwater. This rod gives sensitivity, control and power over rough ground.

Nowadays, there are so many different metal casting lures, but I have found three that work best for me – the Savage Gear Needle Jig and Seeker ISP, both in 40g, and Nomura Umi 20g. These replicate the launce (pictured left), garfish and sandeels found here in Cornwall. As the weather warms, these baitfish can be found in abundance inshore, swimming in shoals around drop-offs and rough ground marks.

In the interest of catch and release, I usually replace treble hooks for an inline Mustard Kaiju single hook and crush the barb. On cheaper lures, replace any inferior hooks because you don't want the tackle to let you down when that big fish connects.

Metal casting lures have slim profiles and cast like bullets into the strongest headwind and sink fast, even in a strong current. Clever additions like internal rattles alert nearby predators. Weighted sides on some lures make them drop with a tempting roll or side to side motion, and a realistic 3D holographic finish makes them seem ultra-lifelike.

When these lures are used in conjunction with braid you can feel exactly what's going on under the water. By using different weights to suit the conditions you can match the hatch perfectly in terms of action and presentation.

METHOD

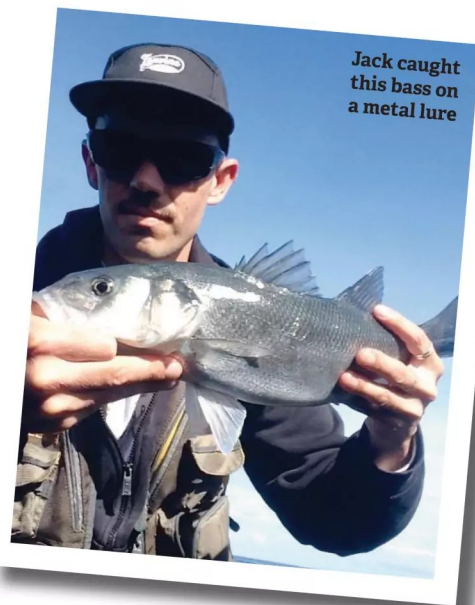
The main target species are bass, mackerel, garfish and pollack, but I have also caught wrasse and sea-trout on metals. You can deter smaller fish by increasing the hook size or changing to a longer lure.

Once your lure hits the water, remaining in contact is key. The lure's impact on the water's surface will alert predators to its location. Reel in a few turns of slack line and feel the weight of the lure on the rod tip. Counting in seconds can help you judge the depth you want to fish, before you commence your retrieve.

While jiggling and retrieving, imagine what action you are imparting to the lure because feeding fish will be attracted to the distress signals. These lures can be retrieved in a variety of ways. For example, being jigged up and down erratically through the water by exaggerated lifts of the rod tip and reeling in the line while doing so. Alternatively, a steady retrieve creates a realistic wobbling action. Slow turns of the reel with the rod tip pointed towards the lure offers maximum control when trying to maintain a certain depth. When other tactics fail, you could allow a lure to stop suddenly, which makes it flutter from side to side and mimics an injured or dead fish.

WISE ON PRICE

Some of my largest fish have been caught on metal casting lures using the shore jiggling method over rough ground. My largest bass of 8lb 8oz was caught during a strong south-westerly blow using a Nomura 40g Metal Umi casting jig, which enabled me to cast far enough to the feeding fish and had the



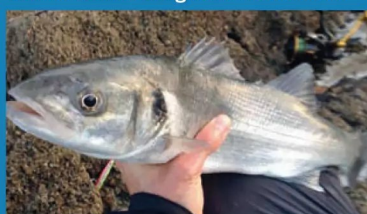
Jack caught this bass on a metal lure

sensitivity to feel for the bite. When initially trying this technique, a handful of cheap metal casting lures used to dictate how long I would spend at a mark. Once they were all gone, so was I. Now that I have got used to where not to cast, I'm confident in buying more expensive imitations, which are more convincing in appearance. Since adopting this method, I am more productive. It is relatively inexpensive way to search out larger areas, further out than I could ever cast before.

I will always carry a variety of lures on any session, whether that's a classic hard bait or a large soft plastic paddletail. All lure anglers must decide which approach should be used at that moment when standing by the water's edge. Being adaptable and using a different technique may lead to unforgettable moments. My advice is to start with cheaper lures and work your way up to more expensive models. Perhaps it's a new way to look at the old school method. Give it a go and once tried, it is certainly addictive. ■



Garfish can be caught on metal lures



Catch a bass and it becomes addictive



Ballan wrasse fall to this method too



Use single hooks on the metal lure



CRUSTACEANS ON A CRUSADE

When bait-robbing crabs decimate the worm baits, you need a cunning plan

IN THE MIDDLE OF MARCH LAST YEAR, after the long winter months started to melt away, I was really champing at the bit for an early plaice session. Rumours were circulating of a smattering of red spots appearing along the Devon coastline and a few phone calls confirmed an element of truth in the information, although the action was spasmodic.

A few days later, fired up with enthusiasm, I was on the road with my pal Steve Lawrence heading west from Dorset to Budleigh Salterton, situated along Devon's south-east coastline and about 15 miles from Exeter. We were meeting Stuart Withyman during the middle of the afternoon in the main beach car park on the town's eastern flank.

Our plan was to fish for three hours in daylight with the high water topping out around dusk and then continue a couple of hours into darkness to see what else could be lurking around. With plaice the main target species we had a good supply of ragworms and I also had a dozen peeler crabs. These crustaceans would turn out to be the key to unlocking the venue's potential.

On this occasion we would be fishing directly below the monument on the top of the cliff, which is located 600 metres west of the car park, just a short walk but normally enough to stay away from the day trippers. The area has a reputation for producing some good quality plaice. Sea

conditions were pretty good, fairly calm with the sun trying to break through the afternoon haze; near perfect, hence our hopes were high of a bagging session. Unfortunately, on occasions nature has a happy knack of bringing anglers down to earth with an almighty bump.





A switch to peeler crab baits by Chris produced this unexpected dogfish in the clear daylight conditons

Budleigh with the crabs waiting for the water temperature to rise to the correct temperature before entering the Otter estuary, which flows out just a few hundred metres to the east of where we were fishing.

In an attempt to avoid the hungry crabs, Stuart dropped a bait only a few metres from the shoreline and was quickly rewarded with the first fish of the session, a small school bass. It gave us some hope of better things to come. I switched to using peeler crab baits, which, being tougher, often outwit the marauders. Any bait lasting just a little longer can give a fish a good chance of finding the bait before the food is devoured by the crabs. Within a few minutes of casting a peeler crab bait my rod tip started to show signs of life, which was definitely not a crab. Much to my surprise the culprit turned out to be a reasonable size dogfish, which was not expected in clear daylight conditions. ►

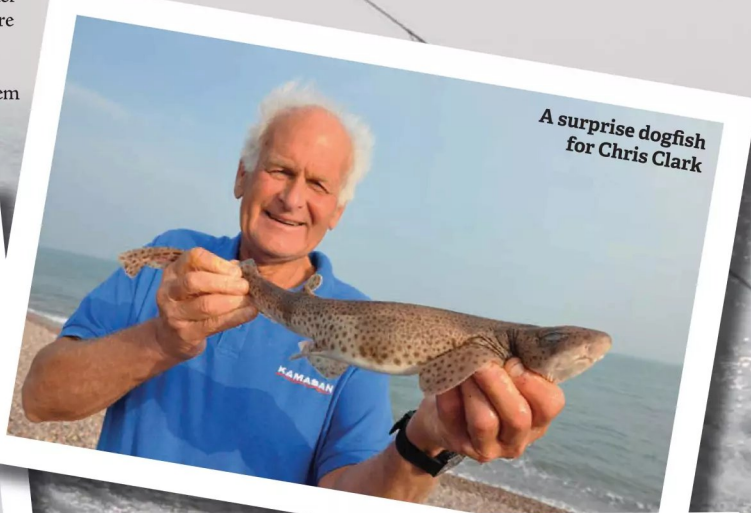
EARLY ACTIVITY

Within a few minutes of casting from the pebble beach, all our rods were showing hints of activity but the culprits were ravenous shore crabs that must have been carpeting the seabed. With our worm baits being stripped from the hooks within a few minutes, the fish didn't stand a chance of getting a meal. Steve, who is used to similarly troublesome crabs within Poole Harbour, switched to his trusty flounder rigs along with huge pop-ups that looked more like mooring buoys. Even hooks kept several feet off the seabed by the pop-ups were no match for the crustaceans, which stripped them clean within a few minutes.

Over the years I have seen the same phenomenon of ravenous crabs stripping baits, especially at Avon Beach at the entrance to Christchurch Harbour. Here, for a couple of weeks during March, they concentrate in their thousands waiting for a slight rise in the water temperature before moving into the harbour where they spend the summer. I can only surmise it was a similar situation at



The target species



A surprise dogfish for Chris Clark



This school bass was caught close in by Stuart Withyman

SIGNS OF LIFE

Landing a couple of fish gave us more impetus. There were fish to be caught but it was just finding a way through the minefield of crabs. Shortly after landing the dogfish one of my rods again showed signs of life. Expecting another doggie I left it for a few minutes before slowing leaning into the fish. It offered little resistance and I was expecting another small school bass to break surface, but was surprised when out popped a nicely marked plaice. The target species had been nailed, despite the hungry crabs doing their upmost to spoil the party.

Under normal conditions peeler crabs would not be my choice of bait when targeting plaice but it proved that there was a realistic chance of catching a few fish if you managed to keep your baits on the seabed for a few minutes without being ravaged by the crabs. This was confirmed 10 minutes later, just as the last rays of sunlight were disappearing over the horizon, when I caught another dogfish.

With daylight a distant memory both Steve and Stuart were struggling but I managed to land a small strap conger again on crab. Then, just before we decided it was time for lines up, I had another enquiry with the rod tip making several dips. Much to my surprise the culprit was another plaice. Would we have caught more of them if the crabs and not been so active?

Generally our trip had proved frustrating but it did highlight the need to be versatile. Never put all your eggs in one basket and always take a variety of baits and equipment. On this occasion it would have been very easy to have thrown in the towel once we had encountered the



Chris added his second plaice late in the session

troublesome crustaceans, but perseverance and adaptability eventually paid dividends with the target species.

If, in hindsight, we had waited a couple of weeks until April, the chances are that the crabs would have moved into the estuary and it would have produced a different outcome. This proved to be the case when I returned a few months later.

On the bright side, I had the bragging rights on our homeward journey because Steve blanked. ■

NEED TO KNOW

GETTING THERE

From the A3052 coast road, branch off on to the B3178 at Newton Poppleford. This leads directly to Budleigh Salterton. The main pay and display beach car park is well signposted.



TACKLE SHOP

■ Exeter Angling Centre, Smythen Street, Exeter, EX1 1BN, tel: 01392 436404.

■ Seaton Angling Centre, The Harbour, Axmouth, Seaton, EX12 4AA, tel: 01297 625511.



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7 PLACES TO TRY NOW...

IN ORDER TO KEEP YOUR LIGHT ROCK fishing fruitful during the tricky time when the seasons change from winter into early spring, finding the best potential venues is essential to beat a disappointing blank.

Tide can be really important in locating such features so this list of the top seven places to fish is based on what I target when fishing from low tide to high water.

Whether it is a rock pool or underwater rock, these features are your shortcuts to success



1 ROCK POOLS

Hunting species in rock pools was one of my favourite childhood fishing memories and it is still just as much fun today. You are unlikely to be catching large fish but the selection of species is fascinating.

Working out how to catch them on a lure is really good fun. A jig head and soft plastic approach works very well, as do split shot rigs. I use my smallest LRF lures for this purpose and keep them under one inch long. My top technique for searching cover, such as boulders in rock pools and alongside weed fringes, is bottom bouncing the jig.

This involves simply the dropping the lure down alongside a boulder or weed fringe. If you are searching pools find a rock with a gap under it and drop the lure in front of the gap. Keeping a tight line, lift the rod tip a couple of inches and drop it again. Make the lure tap against the rock. I like to hop the lure up and down in the same spot two or three times and then pause for a couple of seconds. This tapping alerts any fish to the lure. If a fish is present it will quickly show itself.

I only fish the same spot for about a minute, usually much less. If no bites are forthcoming, I hop the lure a couple of feet along the edge of the weed fringe or boulder and try again.

Because you can see your lure working, it is a great way to refine your technique. By playing with different rod movements you can really get your lure to wiggle and shake. Sometimes the fish want an aggressive lure action, but other times they are attracted to much more subtle movements. Either way, you can see exactly what's going on and react accordingly.



2 HARBOUR MOUTH

As the tide floods, I make my way inshore and start to target the areas with deeper water, especially harbours.

The mouth of a harbour can often be a hotspot for finding fish. Generally a narrow opening will channel the tide and create eddies, especially on the inside edge when the tide is flooding. The increased current can definitely stimulate fish like pollack and coalfish to start feeding. Much like river fish they will lurk on the edge of the tide flow dashing out to intercept prey flooding in with the tide.

Watch for creases and seams where you can see obvious moving water coming into or out of the harbour. I use a soft plastic rigged on a light jig head that will travel with the tide when sinking. I usually try to work the lure with the tide and this can give the effect of a struggling prey item being washed in or out with the current. Predators that lurk here will be waiting to take advantage of this.



3 HARBOUR WALLS

The walls of a harbour offer a fantastic man-made rock face full of holes and cracks, all of which give a home from home to common rock-dwelling species.

From mini species such as blennies and small wrasse to bigger fish like pollack and coalfish, all either use the wall for cover to hunt or to hide from the hunters.

Targeting these rock walls is fairly straight forward and only requires you to drop your lure alongside the wall. The same technique used for fishing rock pools can be applied to harbour walls, except instead of tapping the jig head against the seabed you tap it against the wall. Again the combination of the tapping sound and your softly waving lure will soon persuade the fish to bite.



4 WEED FRINGE

Easily seen especially at low tide, a weed fringe is another great area to target. Those running along the bottom of harbour walls generally separate the rock or wall from the cleaner ground beyond. By targeting the outside edge of the weed fringe you can locate many species, usually a good mixture of those that dwell on sand and those that dwell in the weeds.

The weed acts as cover for the smaller fish and predators take

full advantage by patrolling along the edge of the fringe searching for prey, while mini species use the weed for cover and will dash out to seize prey items, particularly from where the weed meets the sand.

Target the outer edge with jig head or dropshot techniques in much the same way you would work along a rock pool. Keep the lure within a foot of the weed fringe and work your way along the entire length to yield some great results. ►

5 BOATS

Moored vessels, especially commercial boats, can provide great cover for many species of fish. When the boats are cleaning the decks and nets, fish are quick to congregate in order to eat any discard coming off the boat.

From top water down to the seabed, especially at night, various species will take advantage of the commercial boat activity. The fish use the boat as cover and will lurk under the hull using it as an ambush point. Some are merely waiting for food items to wash out from the boat.

A good tactic that has caught me many fish is to alongside the boat with a soft plastic rigged on a light jig head. With a tight line, allow the jig to fall back towards you on a curved fall.

This mimics the small items of food washed off the deck and fish are keen to grab it. It pays to work on either side of the vessel including between it and harbour wall. Working the lure vertically between the boat and the wall can throw up some large species and unusual lure catches such as eels.

One thing to be aware of when working around boats is mooring ropes. These are best avoided, as not only are they a major snag risk, but leaving hooks and jigs in a mooring rope is dangerous. The boat users have to handle the ropes and the last thing they want is hooks in their hands when trying to moor the vessel. Respect the boat owners and be careful not to snag their gear.



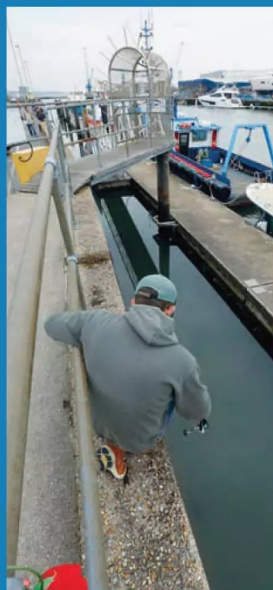
6 PONTOONS

Offering excellent cover for fish to hide, pontoons in harbours or marinas also act as an ambush point for predators. They are a permanent cover point for fish, unlike the transient nature of commercial boats. They are always worth targeting and again can throw up some surprising species.

Target them with the same styles as when working lures around moored boats. Try light jig heads cast along the edge of the pontoon and utilising curved fall techniques. It also pays to work both sides of the pontoon, including the gap between the wall and the floating pontoon.

In order to work a lure in these tight spaces a shorter LRF rod comes into its own and techniques tend to be much more vertical in approach.

When fishing these tight gaps you have to be aware that if you do hook a bigger fish it can be more difficult to land them. The fish are able to rub your line against the edge of the structure and if the gap is quite small then it can be a bit of a struggle to



lift the fish out of the water. If you do hook a bigger fish that dives down under the pontoon then you can push your rod tip into the water so it is below the edges of the structure. This can stop them from rubbing the line against it and assists in landing those feisty specimens.

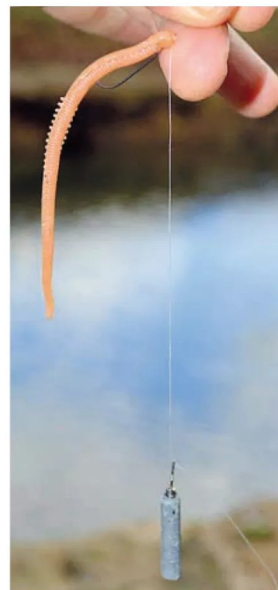
7 DROP-OFFS & UNDERWATER ROCKS

A sudden change in depth on an otherwise featureless seabed attracts many types of fish. The same goes for hidden underwater boulders or lone rocks. These are the hardest to see, especially in deep water.

In order to find these, use dropshot tactics (pictured right) to achieve the most feedback from the bottom structure. Here my tactic is to cast out as far as I can and allow the rig to sink to the bottom. With my lure set a foot from the lead, I begin a gentle twitched retrieve with pauses. All the time I am retrieving I ensure that the weight is hard on the bottom. This is where to get the most feedback when retrieving.

You can feel the soft resistance of the silt and a hard tap as the lead weight hits some sort of underwater structure. Whether this is a branch or a bunch of boulders, these small features in an otherwise flat seabed are where 90 per cent of bites occur.

As soon as you feel a bit of structure, concentrate on working of the lure around this area.



The dropshot rig is great for this because once you feel the structure you can gently work the lure against the lead weight without having to move out of the possible strike zone.

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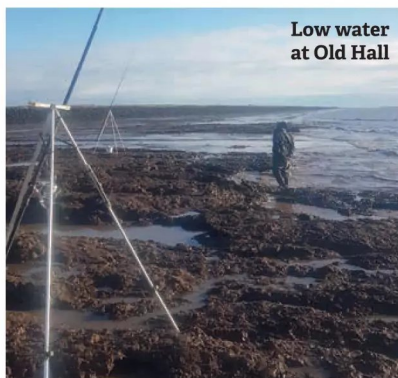
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Rod - Ocea Plugger Flex
Line - Power Pro Depth Hunter 0.41mm

A QUEST FOR COD

Hull angler Matt Hope reflects on his winter season in the Humber and what's next...



Low water at Old Hall



Fishing the flood tide

COD FISHING IN THE HUMBER had an unbelievable start this season with plenty of fish, including a few double-figure specimens, from marks along both the north and south banks of the river.

The timing of this run of big cod could not have been worse for me because I was flat out with my building work and really under pressure to get jobs finished before Christmas. I was working six days a week and spare time was limited.

With the word of specimen cod being landed, some of the more popular or easily accessible venues were extremely busy. A lot of anglers from far and wide were putting in the hours in search of these fish. I don't enjoy fishing in a crowd at best of times so I decided to visit the quieter places and at less favourable states of tide. Low water on

the Humber is very under-fished and there would be plenty of marks that still fished well on both banks.

EARLY START

On my first weekend off, I met my dad Bill at Old Hall to fish over low water. Being up early I called in at Hull's Victoria Dock, which is a popular cod mark, to find lots of rods out but very little showing. I then checked out Paull car park, and quite a few anglers were there too. One angler told me it had been busier but a lot of anglers had gone home. In doing so, they were missing the best fishing time in my opinion.

Soon I was on my way to meet my dad. Parking at Old Hall is limited to a single-track lane where you must leave your vehicle on a grass verge well off the road to allow farm machinery and lorries to use the road. The only car present was my dad's. We set off across the fields on the long walk to the estuary bank. The track was still covered with grass, indicating how few anglers were visiting this mark.

We decided to fish the hard clay in front of the sluice, although the other mark I like is Hawkins Point, both being good low-water venues. A good cast gets you out into the deep-water channel. At the sluice, we set up a rod each before climbing down and walking out on to the mud and clay.

I chose a pulley rig with a pair of size 4/0 Sukuma Manta Extra hooks with a squid and frozen peeler whipped on and cast out as far as I could. We were about 30 minutes or so before low water and the tide run had eased nicely. My bait settled not far from where it had splashed down and was holding in the tide. My dad soon cast out but used squid and frozen black lug.

Constant taps and rattles suggested the river was full of whiting. I retrieved my first cast to find a pair of them had managed to hook themselves and it was the start of 90 minutes of relentless bites from whiting. Once the tide was flooding those bites eased off. A new bait had been out a few minutes and not a sign of a rattle until my rod slammed over. This was a proper one. I got it in the edge and used one of the gullies in the firm clay to lead a cod ashore. We hadn't



Matt Hope caught this cod at Old Hall



A whiting for Bill Hope

taken the scales with us but my dad thought it could have been 10lb because it definitely had the length. It was lean too so we settled for 8lb. After several hours we moved right up to the sluice, but didn't get any more cod.

MORE FISH

Next day I was fishing alone. I called in at Victoria Dock to find all the popular spots taken and decided to head off to Paull car park where it was unusually quiet. Knowing there had been a couple of fish reported on the last tide, I parked and walked up to the lighthouse area. I fished a couple of hours before low water with two rods and the same rigs with only one rockling to show for it.

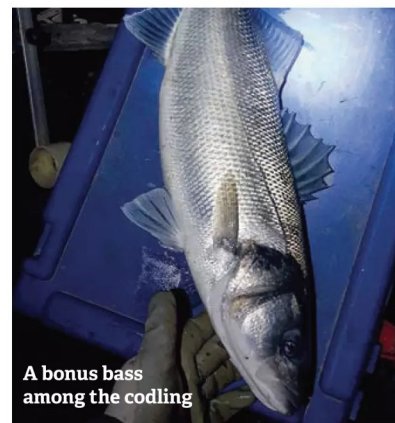
At the same stage of the tide as the previous day's fish at Old Hall, I got a bite and landed a small codling. As I unhooked it my other rod nodded away with a much better fish, which turned out to be a five-pounder. Both fish were returned. On the next cast I had another codling. After that the tide run was getting too much to hold out any longer so I went home. What I had noticed on both days was the cod had bellies full of crabs because you could feel the small hard lumps inside the fish.

Before my next outing I managed to order 100 live peeler crabs. My week at work really dragged, especially knowing I had a fridge full of bait. On the Saturday morning at work I'd received messages about good cod from Victoria Dock during the morning tide and from Paull car park.

Once I finished work, I took my tools home, grabbed some lunch and loaded my tackle and bait in the truck. Off I went, first to see a friend who was fishing at the dock where there had been one or two fish to 7lb. I wasn't staying and chose to fish low water at Old Hall. I didn't manage any big cod but caught four codling of 2-3lb and a bonus 6lb 1oz bass, all on peeler crabs.

I fished these marks several more times and had one trip to Goxhill on the south bank. I caught one more five-pounder on crab and a few smaller ones on lugworms, but the fishing had gone quiet.

With cod showing on the Holderness Coast it is time for me to concentrate my efforts there – once we can travel further. Bring on the spring cod and other species. ■



A bonus bass among the codling

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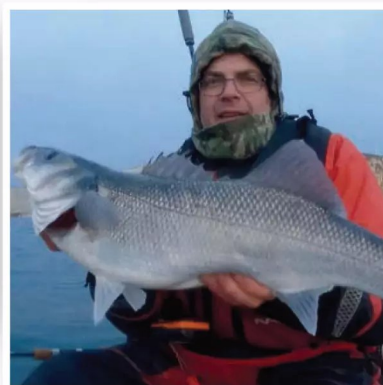
FANCY WINNING SOME QUALITY mono, braid and fluorocarbon from Sufix by catching a great fish? In our catch competition, your target is to catch one over the weight given on our nominated species list. If you do, enter our contest and you automatically stand a chance of winning either our shore or boat bundle.

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There is no choice of prize which is awarded at our discretion.



Martin Larkin, Devon. FISH: 8lb 6oz gilthead bream. BAIT: Live peeler crab on a running leger. VENUE: South West coast. DATE: February 28



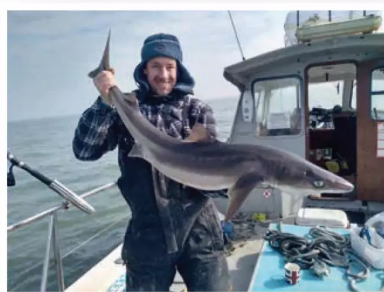
Garry Willis, Eastbourne, East Sussex. FISH: 10lb 2oz bass. BAIT: Storm lure. VENUE: Kayak, Sussex coast. DATE: January 1



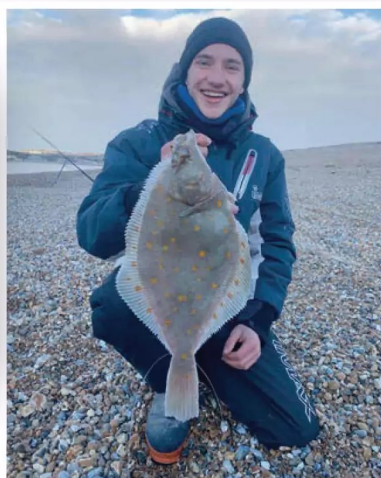
Tommy Fraser, Burra, Shetland Islands. FISH: 9lb 5oz torsk. BAIT: Sidewinder shad. VENUE: Lunna, Shetland Islands. DATE: February 27



Arron Dyer, Ryde, Isle of Wight. FISH: 11lb 13oz undulate ray. BAIT: Bluey and sandeel on pulley rig. VENUE: Isle of Wight. DATE: February 21



Dougal Martindale, East Cowes, Isle of Wight. FISH: 24lb 15oz 8dr spurdog. BAIT: Double squid on running leger rig. VENUE: South of the Needles, aboard Devocean (Kev Sampson), Yarmouth. DATE: March 8



Ian Carpenter, Cardiff. FISH: 10lb cod. BAIT: Ragworms on a Pennell pulley rig. VENUE: Sully, Vale of Glamorgan. DATE: February 1

MONTHLY WINNERS:
SHORE: Tommy Fraser, Burra, 9lb 5oz torsk.
BOAT: Dougal Martindale, East Cowes, 24lb 15oz 8dr spurdog.

◀ **Billy Russell, Deal, Kent.** FISH: 2lb 4oz plaice. BAIT: Ragworms on a loop rig. VENUE: Seaford, East Sussex. DATE: February 10



Mike Watts, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.
FISH: 7lb 2oz bass. **BAIT:** Ragworms and black lugworms. **VENUE:** Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset.
DATE: February 22



Ashley Williams, Freshwater, Isle of Wight.
FISH: 19lb spurdog.
BAIT: Mackerel head on a flowing trace.
VENUE: South of The Needles, on own boat, out of Yarmouth.
DATE: February 22



Steve Stringer, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway. **FISH:** 107lb common skate.
BAIT: Half a mackerel. **VENUE:** Own boat, Portpatrick. **DATE:** February 28



Adam Brain, Aberdeen. **FISH:** 8lb 4oz cod.
BAIT: Mackerel on a pulley rig. **VENUE:** Aberdeen rock mark. **DATE:** February 25



Mike Barlow, Eastbourne, East Sussex.
FISH: 4lb 10oz ballan wrasse. **BAIT:** Squid.
VENUE: Royal Sovereign Shoals, Eastbourne.
DATE: March 3

TARGET HITTERS!

MONTHLY WINNERS:

BASS SHORE

- Mike Watts, Weston-super-Mare, 7-2*, Burnham-on-Sea, Feb 22

BASS BOAT

- Garry Willis, Eastbourne, 10-2*, Sussex, Jan 1

BREAM SHORE

- Martin Larkin, Devon, 8-6 gilthead*, Devon, Feb 28

BULL HUSS BOAT

- Barry Chambers, Plymouth, 13-0*, Plymouth, Feb 22

BULL HUSS SHORE

- Ryan Ashmore, Bideford, 11-1*, North Devon, Feb 28
- Josh Harrison, Cardiff, 10lb*, Welsh rock mark, Feb 28
- Kev Madeley, Paignton, 10-0*, South Devon, March 6

COD SHORE

- Adam Brain, Aberdeen, 8-4, Aberdeen rock mark, Feb 25
- Ian Carpenter, Cardiff, 10-0, Sully, Feb 1
- David Leavens, Hartlepool, 7-4, Hartlepool, Jan 2

COMMON SKATE BOAT

- Steve Stringer, Stranraer, 107lb*, Portpatrick, Feb 28

FLATFISH SHORE

- Jay Citysen, Preston, 2-3 plaice, Blackpool, March 6
- Hallam Earl, Brighton, 2-8 plaice, Hove, March 6
- Brynley Featherstone, Hartlepool, 2-8 plaice, Hartlepool Marina, Feb 26
- Derek Heaton, Hale, 2-4 plaice, Morecambe, Feb 15
- David Howell, Willingdon, 2-7 plaice, Eastbourne, March 2
- Mark Lilley, Poole, 2lb+ plaice, Sandbanks, March 7
- Billy Russell, Deal, 2-4 plaice, Seaford, Feb 10
- Connor Stagg, Barrow, 2-3 flounder*, Ulverston, March 13
- Mark Wedderburn, Carlisle, 2-7 plaice, Whitehaven pier, March 15

LING SHORE

- Tommy Fraser, Burra, 9-5 torsk, Shetland Islands, Feb 27

POLLACK SHORE

- Keith McAllister, Portballintrae, 6-2*, County Antrim, March 9

POLLACK BOAT

- Del Somerville, Portsmouth, 16-2, wreck off Portsmouth, Feb
- Chris Perkins, Guernsey, 16lb, off Guernsey, March 8

RAY SHORE

- Ian Carpenter, Cardiff, 3-4 spotted*, Marcross, March 1
- Arron Dyer, Ryde, 11-13 undulate*, Isle of Wight, Feb 21
- Frank Hodges, Margate, 9-1 thornback*, Sandown Castle, March 6

SHARK BOAT

- Dougal Martindale, East Cowes, 24-15-8 spurdog*, south of the Needles, March 8
- Ashley Williams, Freshwater, 19-0 spurdog*, south of Needles, Feb 22

WRASSE BOAT

- Mike Barlow, Eastbourne, 4-10*, Eastbourne, March 3

MISSION RECORD HOLDERS

BASS

■ **Shore:** 19lb 13oz 8dr
John Locker

■ **Boat:** 19lb 4oz
Wayne Milton

BLACK BREAM

■ **Shore:** 5lb 5oz 1dr
C Le Monnier

■ **Boat:** 6lb 6oz
Tony Heart

COUCH'S BREAM

■ **Shore:** 2lb 21oz 1dr
Lynton Carre

■ **Boat:** 7lb Becky
Lee Hodges

GILTHEAD BREAM

■ **Shore:** 9lb 8oz
Scott Smy

■ **Boat:** 10lb 2oz
Roger Simcox

PANDORA'S BREAM

■ **Shore:** 1lb 2oz
Baz Wheeler

RAY'S BREAM

■ **Shore:** 6lb 1oz
Jordan Colwell

RED BREAM

■ **Boat:** 6lb 4oz
Patrick Meegan

BRILL

■ **Shore:** 6lb 12oz
Mark Griggs

■ **Boat:** 13lb 10oz
Tony Hayward

BULL HUSS

■ **Shore:** 21lb 9oz
M Urquhart

■ **Boat:** 23lb
D Nicholson

BALLAN WRASSE

■ **Shore:** 9lb 4oz
Darren Swift

■ **Boat:** 9lb
Glen Carter

CUCKOO WRASSE

■ **Shore:** 1lb 13oz
Joe Edward

■ **Boat:** 2lb 4oz
D Glendenning

COD

■ **Shore:** 32lb
Adrian Lloyd

■ **Boat:** 43lb 9oz
Chris Proctor

CONGER EEL

■ **Shore:** 66lb 8oz
Andy Eke

■ **Boat:** 109lb 8oz
Roger Beer

DAB

■ **Shore:** 2lb 4oz 12dr
Jason Tucker

■ **Boat:** 1lb 15oz
Sean McCaffrey

DOVER SOLE

■ **Shore:** 5lb 5oz
Phil Troke

■ **Boat:** 4lb 6oz
M Le-Moignan

FLOUNDER

■ **Shore:** 4lb 14oz 8dr
Paul Blehs

■ **Boat:** 5lb 3oz 14dr
Philip Dawson

HALIBUT

■ **Boat:** 56lb 12oz
Peter Strickson

LEMON SOLE

■ **Boat:** 3lb 3oz
G Newcombe

MEGRIM

■ **Boat:** 2lb 14oz
Philip Lewis

PLAICE

■ **Shore:** 6lb 11oz
Martin Coates

■ **Boat:** 8lb 0oz 8dr
M Mowbray

LING

■ **Shore:** 18lb 11oz
Ross McKay

■ **Boat:** 88lb 6oz 8dr
Gareth Laurenson

GOLDEN GREY MULLET

■ **Shore:** 3lb 8oz 8dr
D Woolcombe

■ **Boat:** 4lb 11oz
Stephan Martini

MULLET

■ **Shore:** 11lb 8oz

Glenn Lane

■ **Boat:** 11lb
Chris Harris

POLLACK

■ **Shore:** 18lb 4oz
Chris Griffin

■ **Boat:** 27lb 1oz
Barry James

BLONDE RAY

■ **Shore:** 31lb
Gary Tucker

■ **Boat:** 39lb 10oz
S Underwood

COMMON SKATE

■ **Shore:** 232lb
Lew Marsden

■ **Boat:** 249lb
Hans Dykman

CUCKOO RAY

■ **Shore:** 4lb 11oz
Kevin Hughes

■ **Boat:** 5lb 8oz
L Longmore

EAGLE RAY

■ **Shore:** 102lb
Ray Lewis

ELECTRIC RAY

■ **Boat:** 52lb
Chris Wood

MARBLED RAY

■ **Shore:** 11lb 1oz 5dr
Pierre Garrick

■ **Boat:** 21lb 7oz 12dr
David Bree

SMALL-EYED RAY

■ **Shore:** 17lb 8oz
M Robertson

■ **Boat:** 21lb
Dave Lynes

SPOTTED RAY

■ **Shore:** 7lb 14oz
Liam Warder

■ **Boat:** 8lb 4oz
Neil Buckett

STINGRAY

■ **Shore:** 75lb 4oz
Ed Spring

■ **Boat:** 69lb 8oz
John Styles

THORNBACK RAY

■ **Shore:** 22lb 11oz 10dr
Mike Johnson

■ **Boat:** 24lb 11oz
Gary Mewdell

UNDULATE RAY

■ **Shore:** 20lb 1oz
Steve Harder

■ **Boat:** 25lb 2oz
Scott Russell

ANGEL SHARK

■ **Boat:** 54lb
John Johnson

BLUE SHARK

■ **Boat:** 253lb
James Fellows

MAKO SHARK

■ **Shore:** 194lb 4oz
Andrew Griffith

PORBEAGLE SHARK

■ **Boat:** 484lb 8oz
Chris Bett

THRESHER SHARK

■ **Boat:** 350lb
Bob Smith

SMOOTHHOUND

■ **Shore:** 28lb 10oz
Steve Cullen

■ **Boat:** 30lb
Trevor Knight

SPURDOG

■ **Shore:** 18lb 14oz
William Roche

■ **Boat:** 27lb 3oz
Paul Westaway

TOPE

■ **Shore:** 66lb 10oz
Michael Bell

■ **Boat:** 86lb
David Cook

TORSK

■ **Shore:** 9lb 5oz
Tommy Fraser

TURBOT

■ **Shore:** 20lb 2oz
Eddy Barham

■ **Boat:** 32lb 1oz
Steve Scally

WHITE SKATE

■ **Boat:** 160lb
Pete Hammersley



Brynley Featherstone, Hartlepool.

FISH: 2lb 8oz plaice. **BAIT:** Prawn on LRF tackle.
VENUE: Hartlepool Marina. **DATE:** February 26



David Howell, Willingdon, East Sussex.

FISH: 2lb 7oz plaice. **BAIT:** Salted frozen lug.
VENUE: Eastbourne. **DATE:** March 2



Del Somerville, Portsmouth, Hants.

FISH: 16lb 2oz pollack.
BAIT: Homemade lure.
VENUE: Wreck off Portsmouth.
DATE: February



Hallam Earl, Brighton, East Sussex.

FISH: 2lb 8oz plaice.
BAIT: Lugworm on a loop rig. **VENUE:** Hove.
DATE: March 6



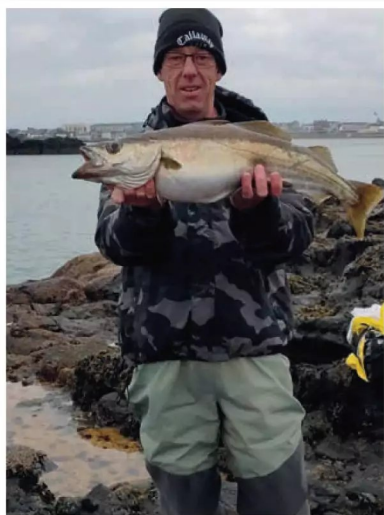
Ian Carpenter, Cardiff.

FISH: 3lb 4oz spotted ray. **BAIT:** Squid and black lug on a pulley rig.
VENUE: Marcross, Vale of Glamorgan.
DATE: March 1



Frank Hodges, Margate, Kent.

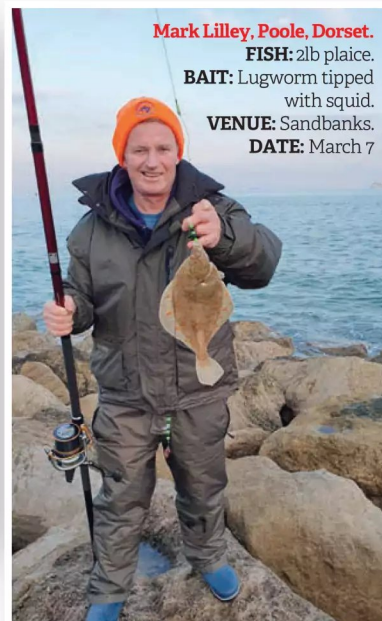
FISH: 9lb 10oz thornback ray.
BAIT: Squid and whitebait on an up-and-over rig.
VENUE: Sandown Castle.
DATE: March 6



Keith McAllister, Portballintrae, County Antrim. **FISH:** 6lb 2oz pollack. **BAIT:** Spinning with frozen sandeel. **VENUE:** North coast of County Antrim. **DATE:** March 9



Connor Stagg, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria. **FISH:** 2lb 3oz flounder. **BAIT:** Ragworm on a two-hook flapper rig. **VENUE:** Ulverston. **DATE:** March 13



Mark Lilley, Poole, Dorset. **FISH:** 2lb plaice. **BAIT:** Lugworm tipped with squid. **VENUE:** Sandbanks. **DATE:** March 7

ENTRY FORM

Name _____

Age _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Tel _____

Email _____

Type of fish _____

Caught at _____

Weight _____

Date caught _____

Bait/Rig _____

Caught from: shore ☐ boat ☐

Boat name _____

Skipper _____

Port _____

My fish was returned ☐
was not returned ☐

We no longer accept postal entries.
Please email all the details required
above to Sea Angler magazine:
sa.ed@kelsey.co.uk

Mark the subject on your email: MISSION ENTRY

YOUR MISSION TARGETS...

Catch a fish on this list at the weight or above in your region to qualify for the chance to win prizes in our Mission catch competition.

To enter, send us the details requested on the entry form (left) and email that information and your picture to sa.ed@kelsey.co.uk

	SHORE	BOAT
Bass	7lb	9lb
Black bream	2lb	3lb
Red bream	2lb	3lb
Couch's & Pandora's bream	1lb 8oz	1lb 8oz
Gilthead bream	4lb	4lb
Ray's bream	3lb	3lb
Brill	3lb	5lb
Bull huss	8lb	12lb
Cod	7lb	10lb
Conger	20lb	40lb
Dab & megrim	1lb	1lb
Dover/lemon sole	2lb	2lb
Flounder	2lb	2lb
Ling	5lb	19lb
Mullet	4lb	5lb
Golden grey mullet	2lb	2lb
Plaice	2lb	4lb
Pollack/coalfish	6lb	12lb
Common skate	60lb	100lb
Blonde ray	12lb	17lb
Thornback ray	9lb	14lb
Small-eyed/undulate	7lb	11lb
Ray (other)	3lb	5lb
Sting/eagle ray	20lb	25lb
Smoothhound	10lb	14lb
Spurdog	7lb	11lb
Tope	27lb	35lb
Trigger fish	2lb	3lb
Turbot	10lb	13lb
Wrasse (ballan)	4lb	4lb
Wrasse (other)	1lb	1lb
Blue shark	-	60lb
Porbeagle/thresher	-	100lb

Send us your entries and win some great prizes

■ The winner of the shore category will receive three spools of Tritanium 0.35mm mono, three spools of 80lb Zippy Shockleader, two spools of 20lb Advance Fluorocarbon and a single spool of 30lb 131 G-Core Braid, worth £129 in total.



■ The winner of the boat category receives two spools of 50lb Advance Superline Braid and two spools of 80lb Zippy Shockleader, worth £154 in total.

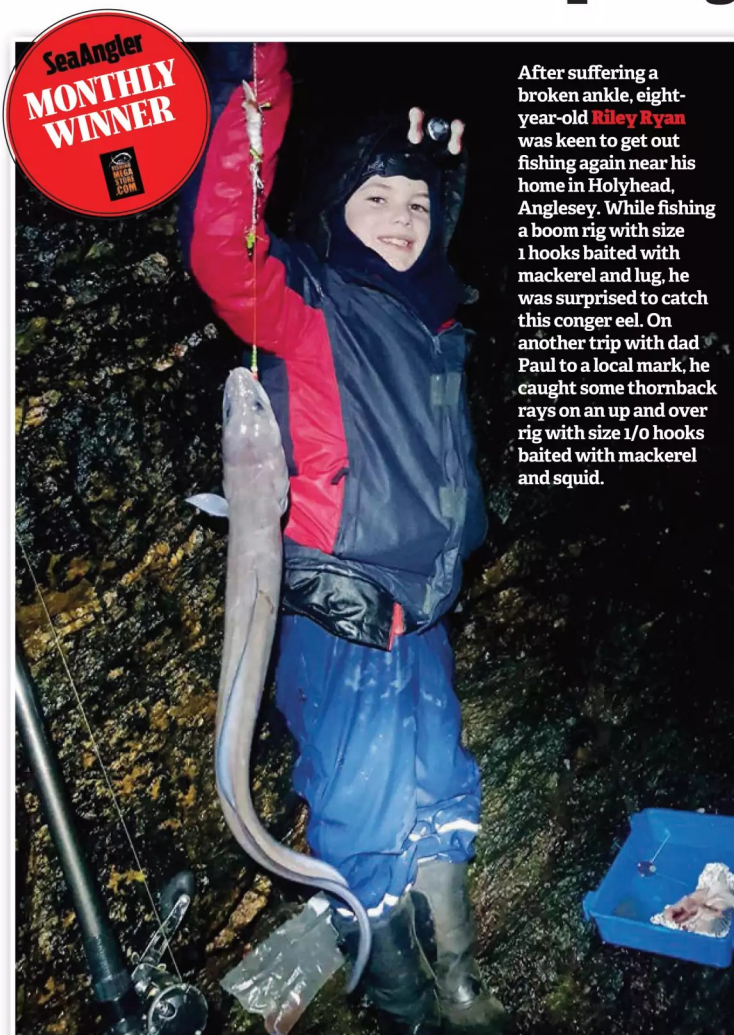


THE RULES...

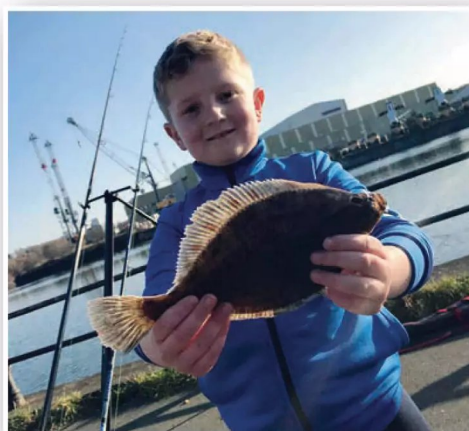
- Only fish caught since March 2021 are eligible.
- We must see a picture of the fish.
- We may refuse an entry.
- Enter by email only (please include all of the information requested on the form, left) to sa.ed@kelsey.co.uk
- Prizes as stated (Sufix reserves the right to send alternatives).
- No correspondence will be entered into.

YOUNG RODS

Sea Angler's celebration of the great angling achievements of its younger readers



After suffering a broken ankle, eight-year-old **Riley Ryan** was keen to get out fishing again near his home in Holyhead, Anglesey. While fishing a boom rig with size 1 hooks baited with mackerel and lug, he was surprised to catch this conger eel. On another trip with dad Paul to a local mark, he caught some thornback rays on an up and over rig with size 1/0 hooks baited with mackerel and squid.



▲ **Myles Hodgson**, aged seven, from Sunderland, caught five flounders, four small whiting and a small coalfish on two-hook flappers baited with frozen black lug and peeler crab while fishing the local River Wear.



◀ On her first fishing trip, eight-year-old **Sophie Roberts**, from Bangor, Gwynedd, caught this whiting on a flapper rig baited with black lugworms. She was shore fishing on the local Menai Strait with dad Liam.



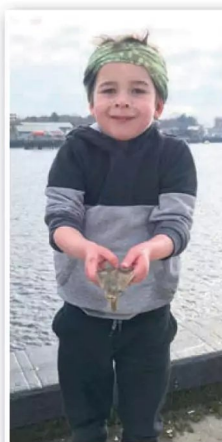
► Fourteen-year old **Ethan Prettyjohns**, from Dartmouth, Devon, landed this 1lb 4oz rockling on a pulley rig baited with half a bluey while fishing a South Hams beach.



▲ Twelve-year-old **Amelie Jenkins**, from Newport, Isle of Wight, caught and released this 1lb 2oz 8dr flounder on a small spoon baited with a ragworm over a fishmeal groundbait during the annual Isle of Wight flounder event on December 27. She won the junior section and was eighth overall out of 88 competitors.



◀ On only his third fishing trip, **Eddie Collins**, aged five, from Whitley Bay, caught several dabs in the River Tyne using lugworms.



Olivia Brady loves going fishing with her dad Chris at her local Shoreham beach, West Sussex. Here the cheeky nine-year-old is sticking her tongue out at a whiting.



SeaAngler MONTHLY WINNER



Six-year-old **Rex Taylor**, from Great Grimsby, North Lincolnshire, caught this double shot of flounders while fishing with dad Mark at Humberston Creek.



▲ While fishing a floating lure over rock ground at Ardwell Bay, four-year-old **Rory Henry** caught this coalfish. It was the first time the lad from Stranraer had landed a fish without assistance.

▲ Brixham SAC member **Ashton Ingham** caught this 3lb 13oz 2dr whiting while fishing with his dad Sean on their boat, out of Brixham, Devon.



While fishing at Hendon Promenade, Sunderland, local lad **Oliver Young** caught this 3lb 8oz dogfish. The 10-year-old angler fished a bluey bait on a one-up, one-down rig.

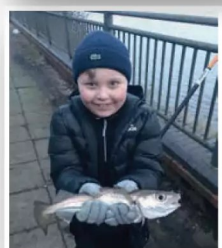


▲ These dabs were the first sea fish caught by seven-year-old **Marco Miller**, from Northampton, who was fishing at Weybourne, Norfolk. The fish fell to a three-hook paternoster rig baited with lug and strips of squid.

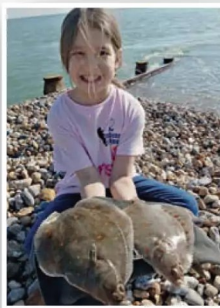


◀ **Efa Roberts**, aged five, and sister Sophie, aged eight, both helped bring in this school bass at Caernarfon on a pulley rig baited with ragworms. The fish was released.

While fishing at Langney Point, Eastbourne, 10-year-old **Oliver Brown**, caught four plaice from 11oz to 3lb 13oz on a two-up, one-down rig baited with frozen lug. The lad from Eastbourne, East Sussex, was fishing with his dad Scott, who caught 10 plaice to 3lb 9oz.



◀ Seven-year-old **Fynley Campbell** from Sunderland fished the River Wear with his dad and caught his first whiting. He fished a two-hook flapper rig with black lug tipped with mackerel. As you can see he's happy with his catch.



▲ **Olivia Scott**, aged nine, and her dad Jason, from Eastbourne, caught 14 plaice to 37cm while fishing at a local mark.



▲ When **Darcey Gifford** went fishing with her dad Matthew, she managed to catch four fish to his two. The duo from Eastbourne, East Sussex, enjoyed a great fishing session at nearby Langney Point, Eastbourne, where five-year-old Darcey caught three plaice from 27cm to 33cm and a 27cm flounder, while her dad landed a double shot of plaice to 28cm.



▲ While small-boat fishing out of Swansea Marina in January, **Kyan Evans** hooked his first strap conger eel on a two-hook flapper rig baited with a piece of mackerel.



▲ Nine-year-old **Alfie Lewis** was very happy after catching his first two bass of the year. The young angler from Haverfordwest caught this one on ragworms at Hook, Pembrokeshire.



▲ On his first beach fishing trip, eight-year-old **George Goodacre**, from Bridlington, caught a whiting on yellowtail lug. He was fishing at Aldbrough, East Yorks.




Eleven-year-old **Christopher Stokes**, from Yatton, Somerset, caught codling of 3lb 8oz and 2lb 8oz on a Pennell pulley rig loaded with black lugworms and squid. He was fishing at Clevedon during his half-term holiday.

£25 TACKLE VOUCHER WINNERS



Fishingmegastore.com awards a £25 voucher prize to each of two winners - the youngster with the best shore fish and another with the top boat catch. The winners can use the voucher to select tackle from **Fishingmegastore.com** which is based in Glasgow and Edinburgh.



MY FISHING DIARY

ADVENTURES OF A JUNIOR SHORE ANGLER

Nine-year-old Tyneside angler Harley Thompson gives an account of his latest shore session...

WITH RESTRICTIONS preventing many of us from travelling to venues, it's been difficult for bait diggers to supply tackle shops with

fresh bait. As a result, with quite a lot of free time on our hands, my dad and I have been collecting our own from the local beaches and harbours.

The North East of England has excellent beaches to dig fresh lugworms, along with muddy harbours where we can regularly collect ragworms too. We can even fill a bucket with palm-sized mussels on the larger tides. You simply can't beat prime fresh bait for going fishing and the best of it is these bait beds are right on our doorstep.

I like to dig at a nearby harbour that holds a variety of baits including lug, ragworms (harbour and whites), plus a few clams too. This place has plenty of features for them to inhabit such as soft gravel, as well as a few old wooden jetties where the mussels attach themselves.

The high tide line is perfect for digging tiny harbour rag (also known as maddies) too. I collect these and keep them for when I'm match fishing or for my flounder fishing. Below these, there are lugworms too. There aren't many available, but I always get enough for a session.

LOCATION

Lugworms give their location away by leaving a cast on the top of the sand. They are easily identified by a small, squiggly mound that is formed when a lugworm eats the sand and

forces the waste out at the surface. Generally, a larger cast will indicate that the worms are bigger. A typical blow lugworm will use a small hole for breathing close to the cast, unlike a black lugworm that will form a small, neat cast. On many venues larger tides are crucial for collecting the bigger black lugworms.

When the tide ebbs at a harbour, often rock and gravel mixed with silt and hard clay will be revealed, and these areas are perfect for digging ragworms. Tiny holes on the surface indicate their presence. As you begin to dig, you will notice tunnels running down into the mud that the ragworms have left behind. Also, on a spring tide, I am lucky enough to be able to dig white rag too. These are a super cod bait, and many match anglers will have these in their bait selection. White rag are difficult to locate but can generally be found in areas where tube worms are present. A professional bait digger taught me to look for sandbanks on a beach because this is where snake white rag will often be located.

When I finish digging, I store my different baits in separate containers and thoroughly rinse them with a sieve and seawater. This helps to prevent the worms breaking. Once rinsed, I will transfer them into cat litter trays at home and never overcrowd them. I then store them in our bait fridge to keep them cool and lively. ■

HARLEY'S TOP TIP

Don't just dig on the ebb tide because when the flood tide begins, the worms often rise higher in the sand.



Digging can be hard work and messy, but it's worth it to get some fresh bait



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Finance example based on Akrios, 9.9% APR, Cash Price £147.50, 10% Deposit (£14.75), Monthly Payment £6.01, Total Amount Payable £140.82

36 MONTHS FINANCE APR 19.5%

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INSTANT DECISION NO PAPERWORK

Finance example based on Akrios, 19.5% APR, Cash Price £147.50, 10% Deposit (£14.75), Monthly Payment £10.50, Total Amount Payable £182.75

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AKIOS **NEW FOR 2021 FURY FX420**

CONTINENTAL ROD • 3 PIECE • 4.2m • 100-180g

FEEL the FURY

The AKIOS FURY is sure to set new standards, the rod looks and behaves fantastically being tested for over 6 months. The AKIOS FURY rod series offers unbelievable value! Made from high modulus carbon fibre, incorporating a spliced tip. SoGrade quality guides and reel seats, it is a true GEM. It's sure to become a best seller in the Surf market in the U.K. around Europe and further afield.

14'4.2m - 100-180g (4-6oz).....£139.99
15'7.6m - 100-180g (4-6oz).....£145.99

AKIOS **NEW FOR 2021 UTOPIA 420**

CONTINENTAL ROD • 3 PIECE • 4.2m/14ft • 112-225g/4-8oz

PHOSPHORESCENT GLOW TIP
• PHOSPHORESCENT GLOW TIP
• FUJI REEL SEAT & FUJI KWAG GUIDES
• CASTING WEIGHT 4-8oz / 112-225g

The Akios UTOPIA is a superb all-rounder combining plentiful power, fast recovery, lightness and bite detection. The phosphorescent glow-in-the-dark tip is a godsend during night sessions. The tip slowly emits light energy absorbed from a headlight ensuring sight of tip action whether or not direct light is present.

POWER PRO
What Dreams Are Made Of

£299.99

AKIOS **HELLRAZOR 420 SS**

3 PIECE • 4.2m/14ft • 112-225g/4-8oz

Fish out of range? GIVE 'EM HELL!

The Akios Hellrazor SS 420 offers outstanding performance at an affordable price including Fuji guides and Fuji reel seat. The AKIOS HELLRAZOR is a powerful blank that still loads its high energy carbon power tip easily. Developed for the angler that's seeking to add extra yardage to their cast.

RRP £169.99 **£149.99**

AKIOS **NEW FOR 2021 MOMENTUM SLR**

CONTINENTAL ROD • 3 PIECE

LIGHT YEARS AHEAD!

• HYBRID TIP

The Akios MOMENTUM SLR is a new breed of ultra-lightweight match rods for the very finest quality from AKIOS. Weighing in at just 445g, the MOMENTUM 425 SLR has been designed for modern match anglers seeking to send baits out over very long distances. The smooth actioned, progressively powerful blank aids in preserving delicate baits during hard casting, while the power mesh carbon butt section offers the power reserves needed to send larger baits and leads out over vast distances.

14'4.2m - 100-180g (4-6oz).....£399
15'7.6m - 100-180g (4-6oz).....£399

AKIOS **ENDURANCE PRO RS2**

3 PIECE (Plus extra tip section) • 4.26m/14ft • 112-225g/4-8oz

A VERSATILE DUO... IN ONE!

• SENSITIVE HYBRID TIP OR POWER TIP

Specifically designed for the modern shore angler that demands versatility without compromising on performance, the dual tipped AKIOS ENDURANCE PRO is built around a high modulus HMX46T carbon blank that generates a remarkable amount of casting power.

DUAL TIP RRP £249.99 **£219.99**

AKIOS **AIRSPED SURF 435**

CONTINENTAL • 3 PIECE • 4.35m/14.5ft • 100-220g/4-8oz

DISTANCE... FIXED!

Akios have done it again, having produced yet another extreme distance casting piece of kit of truly formidable build quality, this time in a continental surf rod. Airspeed. Akios Designed and developed in close collaboration with two times world champions sea angler, Alan Reed, the Akios Airspeed Surf continental rod is a serious piece of kit for serious anglers.

RRP £359.99 **£314.99**

AKIOS **AIRTORQUE 435**

3 PIECE • CARBON CONSTRUCTION • 4.35m/14.5ft • 110-220g/4-8oz

THE TORQUE OF THE BEACH!

WHEN EXTRA POWER IS NEEDED

The new Akios AIRTORQUE is set to be a big hit, offering even greater power and greater casting potential than the Airspeed. The AIRTORQUE, with its higher modulus HMX 43T carbon construction, offers 20% more power through the butt, middle and lower tip section, giving extra power during casting and quicker line pick up giving faster hook penetration.

RRP £369.99 **£319.99**

AKIOS **AIRPOWER RXP SRS 435**

CONTINENTAL ROD • 3 PIECE • 4.35m/14ft 6in • 120-225g/4-8oz

YOU CAN TAME 'THE BEAST'

Now With Sliding Reel Seat Ideal For Fixed Spool And Multipliers. It Allows The Angler to Position The Reel High Or Low On The Rod.

Arguably the most powerful three-piece continental style rod on the market, the AKIOS AIRPOWER has been designed with one thing in mind, to offer EXTREME casting capabilities. With its incredibly powerful high modulus HMX46T carbon construction, progressive action and lightning fast recovery, the AIRPOWER sets new standards for modern three-piece rods.

RRP £419.99 **£359.99**

AKIOS **AIRPOWER RXP 435**

CONTINENTAL ROD • 3 PIECE • 4.35m/14ft 6in • 120-225g/4-8oz

THE THREE PIECE BEAST!

Arguably the most powerful three-piece continental style rod on the market, the AKIOS AIRPOWER has been designed with one thing in mind, to offer EXTREME casting capabilities. With its incredibly powerful high modulus HMX46T carbon construction, progressive action and lightning fast recovery, the rod sets new standards for modern three-piece rods.

HIGH MODULUS NRG • HMX46T CARBON BLANK • HYBRID / SPLICED CARBON • TIP FOR ULTIMATE BITE DETECTION

RRP £419.99 **£339.99**

AKIOS **"RESPECT IS EARNED" NEW FOR 2021 THE GUNNOR GUV GX8 FIXED SPOOL REEL**

• High Strength Carbon Composite Body / Rotor
• 6+1 Stainless Ball Bearings
• Instant Anti-Reverse System
• Long Cast Angled Spool Lip
• Powerful Drag System 16kg/35lb
• Titanium Coated Roller on Hollow Ball Arm
• Machined Aluminium Handle with Power Grip
• Braid Spool: 15lb 400yds, 20lb 280yds
• Deep Spool: 15lb 360yds, 20lb 450yds

RRP £149.99 **£139.99**

AKIOS **WHEN DISTANCE MATTERS SHUTTLE**

A forward thinking company based in the UK. Developed by anglers for anglers who demand new, innovative and durable fishing tackle.

6 Models - from £179.99

NITRON F-15 £199
S-LINE 5 Models - from £114.99
TOURNO 3 Models - from £229.99
DYNAMO 2 Models - from £79.99

AKIOS **FURY FX8**

FIXED SPOOL REEL NEW FOR 2021

AKIOS Fury is a serious piece of kit that doesn't cost the earth. Featuring a high strength carbon composite body and rotor, a hollow ball arm, and a powerful 32lb/15kg drag system, the FURY FX8 is a very capable shore casting reel. Smoothness is assured due to no less than six stainless steel bearings and an additional Instant Anti Reverse (IAR) bearing.

£69.99

AKIOS **FIXED SPOOL REELS**

A TRUE POWERHOUSE REEL... FLAGSHIP MODEL

The deep spool holds a massive 440yds of 30lb mono (or 440yds of 100lb braid)

The Akios IRONLOOP is an absolute brute of a reel that will tame the very largest of fish. **SUPERB!**

RRP £229.99 **£209.99** See website for details

Fireloop Fixed Spool Reel RRP £99.99 **£89.99**
Air Loop R8 Long Cast Fixed Spool Reel RRP £129.99 **£113.99**
Air Loop R10 Long Cast Fixed Spool Reel RRP £134.99 **£123.99**

AKIOS **FIXED SPOOL REELS NEW FOR 2021**

Fury FX8 Fixed Spool Reel **£69.99**
The Gunnor GUV GX8 c/w Braid Spool & Deep Spool **£139.99**
Utopia CX8 Fixed Spool Reel **£129.99**
Utopia SX8 Reel Fixed Spool Reel **£169.99**

anyfish anywhere Blue Label Range These rods offer exceptional performance both in terms of casting and fishing at a price point that makes them very accessible.

four&bait rod mk2

Surfcasting Rods	RRP	OUR PRICE
13ft 3-5oz Fixed Spool	£205	£195
13ft 3-5oz Multiplier	£205	£195
14ft 3-5oz Fixed Spool	£215	£205
14ft 3-5oz Multiplier	£215	£205

SKS&bait rod mk2

Surfcasting Rods	RRP	OUR PRICE
13ft 5-7oz Fixed Spool	£235	£225
13ft 5-7oz Multiplier	£235	£225
14ft 5-7oz Fixed Spool	£245	£235
14ft 5-7oz Multiplier	£245	£235
15ft 5-7oz Fixed Spool	£255	£245
15ft 5-7oz Multiplier	£255	£245

SONIK VADER XS SHORE RODS **SKS BLACK SHORE RODS** **NEW FOR 2020**

Unbeatable performance for the price. Available in three lengths to cover most shore fishing applications, the blanks are well balanced with a progressive casting action and excellent bite registration.

VaderXS Shore Rod - 13' - 4-6oz - 2 Piece.....£54.99 **£49.99**
 VaderXS Shore Rod - 14' - 4-7oz - 2 Piece.....£64.99 **£59.99**
 VaderXS Shore Rod - 15' - 4-7oz - 2 Piece.....£69.99 **£64.99**

Featuring upgraded more powerful yet lighter blanks from its SKS Shore Rod predecessor that without ever casting ability easily: each rod is individually tailored to offer the perfect 'all round' actions, which mean they are as effective on clean ground as they are in heavy terrain.

SKS Black Shore Rod - 12' - 4-6oz - Multiplier of Fixed Spool.....£79.99
 SKS Black Shore Rod - 13' - 4-6oz - Multiplier of Fixed Spool.....£89.99
 SKS Black Shore Rod - 14' - 5-7oz - Multiplier of Fixed Spool.....£99.99

TG-F1 MK5 CHROME 6500

Built in the UK to the highest standards making it the ultimate casting/fishing reel available straight out of the box.

- End plates: Chromed Brass.
- Spool: Hard anodised Duralumin.
- Bearings: Hybrid Ceramic ABEC 7 Bearings with Silicon Nitride Balls.
- Pinion gear: Hardened Bronze.
- Brakes: Mono-Mag & Centrifugal braking systems.
- Mag: Mono-mag.
- Gear ratio: 5.3:1.

£479.95

The Rocket Reel Company **MADE IN UK**

SHIMANO SURF LEADER ULTRA BX SURF RODS **FLAGSHIP MODEL**

The new flagship surf rod. Because of the Spiral X & Hi-Power X blank technology, this rod is the ultimate surf rod with unbelievable distance casting abilities. The Spiral X construction results in reduced torsion and ovalisation while the Hi-Power X construction results in reduced blank twist and greater rod strength. Overall this creates a very strong, stiff and lightweight rod blank with incredible casting performance (both distance and accuracy).

Surf Leader Ultra BX 13ft 11in Tubular 3 Piece.....£469.99 **£414.99**
 Surf Leader Ultra BX 13ft 11in Solid 3 Piece.....£469.99 **£424.99**
 Surf Leader Ultra BX 14ft 9in Tubular 3 Piece.....£469.99 **£414.99**
 Surf Leader Ultra BX 14ft 9in Solid 3 Piece.....£469.99 **£424.99**

SHIMANO SpeedMaster BEACH RODS

- High Modulus Full Carbon + HPC blank with Nanosheet technology produces lighter, stronger blank with increased responsiveness and casting distance.
- Extra fast action for increased tip speed when casting.
- Ultra sensitive solid tip design for excellent bite registration.
- Fuji Fastlite K Type anti-tangle guides and Fuji DPS reel seat.
- Cast control handle grip for assured handling when casting.

Speedmaster Beach Rod 14ft 9in 3 Piece - 120g.....£209.99
 Speedmaster Beach Rod 15ft 5in 3 Piece - 150g.....£209.99

SHIMANO SpeedMaster LITE ROD + 2 TIPS

- High Modulus Full Carbon + HPC blank with Nanosheet technology produces lighter, stronger blank with increased responsiveness and casting distance.
- Extra fast action for increased tip speed when casting.
- Ultra sensitive solid tip design for excellent bite registration.
- Fuji Fastlite K Type anti-tangle guides and Fuji DPS reel seat.
- Cast control handle grip for assured handling when casting.

Speedmaster Lite + 2 Tips 13ft 2 Piece - 120g.....RRP £189.99 **NOW £169.99**

SHIMANO NEXAVE SURF LITE / ROUGH GROUND

The Nexave 2PC is a strong rod with a fast progressive action with good casting qualities. It comes in 2 models: a Lite version (good for allround usage with loads up to max 120 gram) and a Rough Ground version (for heavy-duty usage with loads up to 225 gram). The Lite has a Pac Bay Plate reel seat and the Rough Ground a Shimano Sliding reel seat. This sliding reel seat gives the angler full control, because with this the height of the reel can be adjusted.

Nexave Surf Lite 13ft 120g 2 Piece.....RRP £129.99 **NOW £114.99**
 Nexave Surf Rough Ground 13ft 225g 2 Piece.....RRP £139.99 **NOW £124.99**

SHIMANO STC TRAVEL SURF RODS

The STC Surf rods are completely redeveloped and are the successors of the Bestmaster STC Surf rods which are already in the Shimano rod range for a long time. These rods are ideal for anglers who are travelling to abroad fishing destinations. These Surf rods are suitable for all-round surfcasting, but they are stronger than conventional surf rods, making them very suitable to fish for big fish from the shore / beach.

STC Surf BX-H 4.25m 6 Piece.....RRP £219.99 **NOW £199.99**
 STC Surf 13ft 6 Piece.....RRP £239.99 **NOW £219.99**

anyfish anywhere **PRO RED LABEL SERIES** **NEW FOR 2021**

Every serious angler should have a good measure of confidence and competence with all the equipment he uses, these rods are able to back that up on the beach week after week. And put fish in the bucket, cast after cast, fish after fish after fish.....

The worlds first truly Professional standard beach fishing rod

PRO Series - an all new professional standard in sea fishing rods

England stalwart George Smith

Tournament GBFS Pro MK2 **Fixed Spool 14' - Casts 4-8oz (112-225g)** **RRP NOW £525 £499.99**

Tournament Match PRO MK2 **Multiplier 13' 11" - Casts 4-7oz (112-200g)** **RRP NOW £525 £499.99**

SONIK GRAVITY X5 HT

Unground carbon finish at rod joints makes it easier to take apart after use + White hollow carbon tip for easy bite detection in poor light conditions + Fuji corrosion control frames provide 7 times more corrosion resistance + Shrink wrap on the lower handle to improve grip whilst casting + Super lightweight high modulus carbon blank + X5 multi-directional nanofibre tip section lay-up + Fuji Alconite K Series guides + Fuji DPS reel fitting +

It's an absolutely fantastic shore rod 'The ultimate power is utterly immense and evident during the casting process'

Paul French - Sea Angler review issue 566 Jan/Feb 19

14ft - 5-7oz - 2 Piece **RRP £249.99**
 15ft 4in - 4-8oz - 3 Piece **£249.99**

A true all rounder...

SONIK SKS BEACHCASTING REELS

Designed to give smooth long casts, the large handle helps to speed gear and fish back to the beach. **RRP £39.99** **£35.99**

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The new Ultegra BX has a new improved blank with Hi-Power X technology. This blank stands out in strength and stiffness and reduces blank twist, making this rods at true casting machine. The rod blank is strong, stiff and yet light of weight. The Hi-Power blank provides excellent casting distance and accuracy. All rods have the Cast Control Grip to facilitate a strong hold when casting.

Ultegra BX Surf 13ft 11in 225g Tubular 3 Piece.....RRP £274.99 **NOW £244.99**
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 Ultegra BX Surf 14ft 9in 225g Tubular 3 Piece.....£289.99 **£254.99**
 Ultegra BX Surf 14ft 9in 225g Solid 3 Piece.....£299.99 **£259.99**

SHIMANO ALIVIO BX TUBULAR TIP SURF RODS

The new entry level Shimano 3pc surf casting rods. Even for this price level, the XT30 blanks are very good (stiff, responsive and powerful) and in combination with the anti tangle Hardlite guides, this new Alivio casts big distances.

- Fast action composite blank
- Excellent combination of distance casting performance and value for money
- Shimano anti-tangle stainless steel Hardlite guides
- Shimano DPS-type reel seat

Alivio BX Surf 13ft 11in 225g Tubular 3 Piece.....£59.99
 Alivio BX Surf 14ft 9in 225g Tubular 3 Piece.....£69.99

SHIMANO SpeedMaster BXG SURF RODS

The Speed Master surf rod is completely renewed: the new blanks are built with HPC200+NANO technology, making them lighter and stiffer for increased casting distance. In addition, new hybrid tip models are added to the range.

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 Speedmaster BXG Surf Rod 4.5m 3 Piece - 225g - Tubular Solid or Hybrid Tip.....RRP £209.99 **NOW £179.99**

TUBULAR TIP Traditional tip action **SOLID TIP** Ultra sensitive tip action **HYBRID TIP** Sensitive tip action

SHIMANO VENGEANCE SURF RODS

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- The tip sections have reduced diameters (0.5 mm less) which makes them lighter and more sensitive for better bite registration.
- Cast Control Grip for good grip when casting.

Vengeance BX Tubular Surf Rod 4.25m - 225g 3 Piece.....RRP £349.99 **NOW £284.99**
 Vengeance BX Tubular Surf Rod 4.5m - 225g 3 Piece.....RRP £399.99 **NOW £334.99**
 Vengeance BX Solid Surf Rod 4.25m - 225g 3 Piece.....RRP £349.99 **NOW £284.99**
 Vengeance BX Solid Surf Rod 4.5m - 225g 3 Piece.....RRP £399.99 **NOW £334.99**
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Power Aero 14000 XSD Reel **RRP £369.99** **£349.99**

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- Japanese Shrink Tube Handle
- Slide Locking DPS Reel Seat
- Fuji Guide with Alconite Rings

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Harnessing the best performance from HVF and X45 ensures that these Saltist rods not only have the power but the torque busting resistance of X45 ensures you get the maximum return form effort.

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- X45 Technology
- Fuji 'O' Ring Guides
- Fuji Reel Seats
- EVA and Shrink Grip handles

	RRP	NOW
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13ft 6in - 3-7oz - Multiplier	£225	£184.99
14ft 2in - 3-7oz - Multiplier	£235	£189.99
14ft - 3-6oz - Fixed Spool	£245	£199.99
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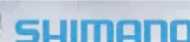


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SW-C 4000 XG	SW-C 4000 HG	SW-C 5000 XG
SW-C 5000 HG	SW-C 6000 PG	SW-C 6000 HG
SW-C 6000 XG	SW-C 8000 HG	SW-C 8000 PG
SW-C 10000 PG	SW-C 14000 XG	
SW-C 18000 HG	SW-C 20000 PG	SW-C 30000

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13ft 6in - 3-7oz Multiplier Rings 2 Piece	£350	£299

	RRP	NOW
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- SEAGUIDE Deep Drawn Frame Guides with Aluminium Oxide Ring
- Split EVA Grip Handle
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13ft 6in - 100g-200g - Multiplier	£165	£149
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Sea Angler Review, June 2019

Read the review by DAVID BARHAM on our website



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A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN



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BOAT ANGLER

17 PAGES OF ADVICE, TIPS AND TACTICS FOR FISHING AFLOAT

It's an unconventional bait, but plaice will take a thinned-down mackerel strip

Your guide to what should be available for boat anglers to catch during the coming months



When you drop on a shoal of bream it's easy to catch them two or three at a time



Words and photography by DAVE BARHAM



SPRING INTO ACTION



This is what Dave looks forward to every spring, a juicy turbot for dinner

WITH LOCKDOWN likely to ease and anglers being allowed to travel to go fishing, coupled with the 'Rule of Six' coming

back into play as far as charter boats are concerned, it's time to look forward to what could be available from April.

I love this time of year. For me it's all about light-tackle fishing with spinning rods and reels. Plaice, in particular, are often found in huge numbers and are willing to feed hard.

The thing to remember here is that they are returning from spawning, and as such are ravenous. I rarely keep one to eat at this time of the year because they tend to be really thin. Experience has shown that even if I manage to scrape off a wafer-thin fillet, the flesh is usually very flaky and watery – not good eating. I prefer to catch and release the red spots until they've had a chance to fatten up a bit later in the year.

Brill and turbot are another early spring target, and more often than not they are usually really fat and make great eating. Then, of course, there are bream and smoothhounds. I can't wait.

FLATTIE TACTICS

The standard tactic for catching turbot and brill on the drift is to fish a 36-inch trace with size 4/0 or 5/0 hook baited with either half a

fillet of mackerel or a whole fillet if the water is coloured. I remove the fillet from the mackerel and then cut away as much of the meat from the skin as possible, then simply cut the 'meatless' fillet in half lengthways and use the shiny silver belly section.

I've also caught a fair few plaice using this thinned-down mackerel strip bait, so it's well worth giving it a go on ground where plaice and turbot are known to inhabit.

The tactics for targeting plaice are pretty much identical to those employed when fishing for turbot. When the boat is drifting with the tide, simply lower your baited rig and lead weight over the side until it hits the seabed. Then let off a few yards so that the bait is fished slightly away from the boat. The key is to stay in contact with the seabed at all times.

Plaice show a definite liking for long, thin baits, so cram a few wriggly ragworms on your hooklength and follow this by tipping off your hook with a long, thin strip of squid. Talk to any skipper that fishes out of Weymouth, and they'll tell you to tip off your rag and squid bait with a whole uncooked king prawn. For some reason the plaice there love them, and most of the 5lb-plus fish are caught using this bait.

Other baits do work well, and a combination of ragworms, black lug and squid is another option. Peeler crabs, mussels and razorfish also work well in some areas of the country.

When you're drifting for flatties you will feel your lead bumping and banging on the seabed through your rod tip. It takes a bit of getting ▶



A squid head works wonders for bream

used to because at first every little bump or irregularity feels like a bite. However, there's no mistaking the tell-tale rattle when a hungry flatie grabs your bait.

You need to be on the ball when fishing like this. As soon as the plaice takes the bait, you need freespool and let line peel off the reel for a count of five to allow the flatie to eat the bait and find your hook. Then it's simply a matter of re-engaging the spool and playing the fish to the boat.

Do not to bully the fish too much. Plaice in particular have a habit of letting go of the bait as they near the boat. Maintain a steady pressure and keep winding – then you will reap the rewards. There's more about plaice on page 54.

BLACK BREAM

Another spring target for many boat anglers is the black bream. Unlike the plaice, which are returning from a winter spawning, the bream congregate in large numbers just before they begin to spawn.

Spring is all about spinning rods and fixed-spool reels for Dave



When fishing over rough ground, keep it simple. A two or three-hook paternoster made with dropper loop knots or two-way beads can be very effective if you want to catch numbers of fish, but I prefer the more sporting approach of a single-hook running leger rig, tied with 30 inches of 12lb fluorocarbon. This tactic will often find the bigger fish too.

Hooks are the most important aspect of any bream rig. They have small mouths and bite fast, so hook size and a quick set are paramount if you want to land fish. Size 4 carp hooks, Chinu and J' hooks in size 1/0 and under will guarantee fewer missed bites.

A popular trick is to add a one or two 3mm or 5mm yellow beads directly above the hook next to the hook eye. There's something about using this yellow bead that definitely increases bites.

Always use the lightest outfit you can. In shallow water, with little run of tide, I always fish with a spinning rod, whereas in deeper water I may beef it up to a 6lb or 12lb-class outfit if I need more than six ounces of lead weight to hold bottom. Fast bite detection is needed to enable you to react quickly to set the hook or you will find your bait robbed.

Talking of which, strips of squid or pieces of ragworm are the most widely used. Limpets, hermit crab tails, scallop frills, mussels and fish strip all score well. My favourite bait for big bream is a squid head, either whole if it's a small calamari, or cut in half lengthways for larger heads. I also like to pierce the eyes of the squid with the point of the hook before sending it down, to release even more scent into the water.

SMOOTHHOUNDS

If we have warm weather, then late April can often herald the arrival of smoothhounds as they head inshore to search out the first moult of peeler crabs.

The most common rig used for smoothhounds (often called smuts) is a running leger. The easiest way to set this up is to attach a zip slider or link swivel to the lead weight, then run your reel line through the slider/swivel, add a bead and attach a swivel to the end.

For the hook snood, you will need around three feet of 30lb mono. Any lighter and you risk the fish biting through it. On the business end, I recommend a strong hook pattern, something like the Sakuma Manta or Varivas Big Mouth, in size 3/0 or 4/0.

When it comes to bait, peeler crabs are a good option. These can be presented whole without peeling them. Simply pass the point of your hook up through the base of the crab and out through the top of the shell. The peeler gives out just enough scent to attract the hounds, but not too much scent that attracts dogfish and other nuisance species. If you are casting away from the boat, you may wish to add a couple of turns of bait elastic to ensure the best presentation possible when it hits the seabed.

If you're fishing a bit further offshore in deeper water, try fishing hardback shore crabs. Simply hook one though the base of the shell or cut larger crabs in half to allow the juices to flow out.

Another very popular bait, especially in shallow estuaries, is the hermit crab. One or two hermits removed from their shells and hooked through the soft body can give instant results. It's not uncommon to catch bass when using this tactic.

If all else fails and you can't get hold of crabs then squid will catch you plenty of decent hounds. If you're just after a few bites and not worried about targeting the big girls, then ragworm baits will produce a few hounds as well as bonus school bass in some areas.

Smoothhound bites tend to be a couple of small tugs on the rod tip before pulling down firmly as the fish swims away. Ideally, you should keep the rod tip low and quickly wind up the slack. Then, as you feel the weight of the fish, raise the tip firmly and keep winding.

It's vitally important that you set your drag correctly before you hook into a hound. A double-figure fish can easily strip 50 yards of line on its initial run. If your drag is too tight, you could snap your line or, worse still, lose your rod over the side.



Smoothhounds provide great sport once they start to arrive in April and early May

HOW TO PREPARE A TRIMMED MACKEREL STRIP



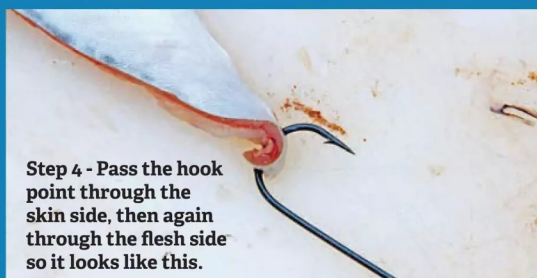
Step 1 - Remove the fillet from your whole mackerel.



Step 2 - Using a sharp knife, remove as much of the white flesh from the fillet as you can.



Step 3 - Now cut the thinned-down fillet lengthways and use the shiny silver belly section.



Step 4 - Pass the hook point through the skin side, then again through the flesh side so it looks like this.

HOW TO PRESENT A WHOLE PEELER CRAB



▲ 1: This peeler is too far gone to use whole, ideally you want one that hasn't begun to 'pop' yet.

► 3: That's all there is to it. You can add some bait elastic if you plan on casting it a long way.



▲ 2: Place the point of your hook through the middle of the flap underneath the crab and out through the top of the shell.



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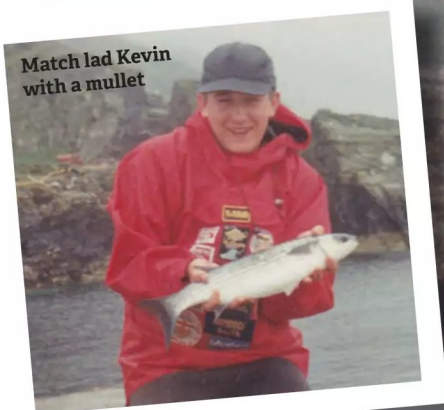
FROM ANGLER TO SKIPPER

NEW
SERIES

In the first of a series, leading charter boat operator Kevin McKie recalls how his love of sea fishing began



The 21lb turbot caught on a Bold SEC trip



Match lad Kevin with a mullet



Dogfish delight

FOR EVERY ANGLER THERE IS A moment in fishing that sticks in your mind and stays with you all your life. It is often the thing that got you hooked, such as catching your first fish or enjoying an angling moment with family and friends. For me this happened when I was 11 years old during the summer of 1991 on a family holiday to Anglesey in North Wales.

My dad took my brother Greg and I to Holyhead Breakwater. We were armed with fresh lugworms and ragworms from the local tackle shop. We were keen coarse anglers but had no sea tackle. All we had was coarse feeder rods, 6lb line, one-ounce weights and size 6 hooks. We dropped our lines down the side of the wall and were straight into ballan and corkwing wrasse, three-bearded rockling, pollack, coalfish, whiting and scorpion fish. For me, this was incredible. I did not know what I would catch next.

After that fishing trip my coarse fishing took a back seat and it was full steam ahead with sea angling. As the weekends approached, I nagged my dad to take me to different places around North Wales, travelling hundreds of miles in his Morris Marina. I was happy to catch anything, although dogfish were my favourite fish. I used to love them as a kid, but how times have changed.

On my 13th birthday my dad booked us a charter trip on The Rose, out of Rhos-on-Sea. I was far too excited to sleep the night before. In the morning the skipper took us out about 40 minutes from the mooring and dropped anchor. Within minutes we were catching

whiting, dogfish, dabs and thornback rays. I had never seen anything like this before and thought I was in heaven. After that trip I pestered my dad to take me on another boat trip as well as shore fishing every weekend.

After a few cancelled boat trips we managed to get a trip on the North Star, out of Whitby. I remember it like it was yesterday; a flat calm sea and the sun was shining. The skipper's name was Tutt Uttley. I remember asking him why he had 30 wooden fish boxes at the back of the boat. He said 'because we are going to fill them today'. He was not wrong. Every drop was a fish, cod to 15lb and ling to 20lb. My dad insisted we put the cod back once we had enough, which resulted in some very funny looks from the other anglers and the skipper.

CLUB SCENE

By now my dad suggested I joined a local fishing club, probably because he could not keep up with my increasing addiction to sea fishing. I got a recommendation to join New Brighton SAC, based on the Wirral. It was possibly one of the best things I ever did. They fished family-friendly local matches every weekend and once a month in North Wales. This is where I started to learn how important fresh bait, its presentation and rigs were for catching more fish and different species.

I was absorbed everything I could about match fishing at a rapid pace. At this point I left school and landed my first job in Taskers Angling. After work each day I would be collecting bait or going fishing, and at the weekend I would either be match fishing or going to watch how the top match anglers did it. I picked up loads of tips and ideas. As my confidence grew I started fishing events run by the North West Association of Sea Angling Clubs and this is where things really happened. I started travelling with local match anglers all over the UK and Ireland. After some individual and team wins, I finally got my opportunity to fish for England Juniors in the World Championships in Dieppe, France, which was an excellent experience. I did well on two of the four days.

A few months after this trip, match fishing in the UK totally changed because it went from keeping everything in size for the final weigh-in to measure and release. This was much better for the fish but the size limits were reduced because the fish were being released. For me, this was not the style of match fishing I liked because now you were targeting as many small fish as possible, as well as bigger fish. It was all about speed fishing and I realised it was time to get back into boat fishing.

BOLD MOVE

In 1997 I joined Bold Sea Fishing Club in Widnes. Run by Ford workers from the Halewood plant, they had been fishing all over the UK for more than 20 years with some of the top skippers. I was the youngest in the club. My first trip with them (at night in the back of a van with only a mattress to



Kevin (second from right) on England duty



Showing off a ling during his first trip out of Whitby



Dreams of becoming a skipper would be fulfilled

As an England junior, he didn't enjoy the switch to speed fishing



no fight at all. As I was reeling it in from 250ft of water I joked to the angler next to me that it was a big turbot. We both laughed. I honestly thought it was a ling but it was a massive turbot. The skippers rushed over with the landing net. The angler next to me had been fishing for 40 years and had never caught one. He could not believe I called it as well before I saw it. The fish weighed 21lb – a fish on a lifetime. Not bad for a spotty kid on his first trip with the club.

FIRST BOAT

Later that year I went to Plymouth for the first time. The club had booked two days on Tiburon, skippered by Graham Hannaford. The boat was immaculate and looked like it had just come out of the showroom. Graham was a strict skipper who wanted everyone fishing the right way. If you didn't, he soon let you know. Some people could take this the wrong way but it was definitely the right way. If someone is paying you to put them on fish then you need them to fish correctly so they have the best possible day and will book another trip.

The fishing was excellent. This is where I learned how to fish long traces (15-18ft or more) without tangling, while drifting over deep water wrecks using lures for pollack, cod and ling. On the second day we were fishing at anchor in over 250ft of water over a wreck that was stuffed with ling to 20lb and congers to 50lb. I was using a single-speed reel and struggling to retrieve the 3lb lead weight, even without a fish on the line. This is when Graham came over with one of his Shimano TLD30 two-speed reels and suggested I tried it in low gear. The difference was amazing and reeling in was effortless.

On the way back to port I asked Graham loads of questions about being a skipper. I was probably annoying him but he was a fountain of knowledge. As soon as I got back to work in Taskers Angling, I bought a load of Shimano fishing tackle, including a TLD30 two-speed reel. I still have most of the gear 24 years later, which proves that having quality kit pays off.

My 18th birthday was fast approaching and I was due a lump sum from an endowment set up by my grandparents. I got a tidy sum and went looking for a small boat, but the problem was I couldn't drive a car. This would be an issue for most people but not for me.

My mate Sid could drive and he had a tow bar on his Vauxhall Cavalier. I found a Warrior 150 with a 75hp outboard, even though it was rated for a 60hp maximum engine. This thing could really fly at 35 to 40 knots on a calm day. I put the boat in Pwllheli Marina so we didn't have to launch it each time we went fishing and over the next few years I would take my friends out on my days off work. We had an amazing time, especially from May to September. ■

Teenager with bass attitude



The boyhood boat fisher



sit on) was to Exmouth, Devon, to fish with Colin Dukes on his massive charter boat, Smuggler 3.

The plan was to drift a few wrecks for pollack and cod before getting the anchor down for ling and congers. It was wind against tide for most of the day so Colin told us the fishing could be difficult at times. Back then I didn't really understand what he meant. Once the anchor was down, I remember the skipper recommending a 6ft trace made with 250lb mono, so I did as I was told. What happened next is what I truly love about boat fishing.

I hit the bottom with a fresh mackerel flapper and about two minutes later I felt a vicious bite and a big heavy slow pull. I was into a good fish but there was

PART TWO: MY FIRST CHARTER BOAT



AIR MAIL

Blue heaven

Many anglers believe catching a marlin
is the greatest achievement in angling



For many anglers, marlin are the pinnacle

FEW BLUE WATER ANGLERS WOULD argue that of all of the species of gamefish caught in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world, the blue marlin ranks as number one. A visually beautiful species of billfish, it possesses incredible power, stamina and speed, and when hooked is guaranteed to provide a spectacular display. For many anglers catching one is the pinnacle of their fishing career.

Records for two species, the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific, are kept by IGFA. The all-tackle record for the Atlantic blue is 1,402lb 2oz, caught in 1992 off Brazil, and that for the Indo-Pacific version is 1,376lb, held by a fish caught in 1982 off Hawaii. Much larger specimens have been taken on rod and line but were not accepted for record status. The largest blue on record, caught in 1970 off Hawaii, weighed 1,805lb.

TOP TACTICS

The blue marlin spends most of its life in deep water offshore. The exception is when fish are located near islands where water dropping down to several thousands of feet is within close proximity. The species is also found near offshore banks where oceanic currents push cold, nutrient-rich water up from the depths. Here sunlight stimulates a food chain that sustains vast shoals of baitfish, along with their predators.

Few anglers enjoy trolling but pulling a spread of large lures at up to nine knots is standard practice. Relatively large numbers of 100-300lb fish are encountered in a few areas and can be caught on smaller lures and baits. The most exciting method is

to first raise and then tease the fish close to the back of the boat, from where the angler free-spools either a deadbeat or a livebait back to the fish. The takes defy description.

BEST DESTINATIONS

Hawaii is the top destination for big Pacific blues in excess of 1,000lb, known as granders. Many of the remote island nations scattered throughout that vast ocean also offer excellent fishing, notably Fiji, Tonga, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Samoa.

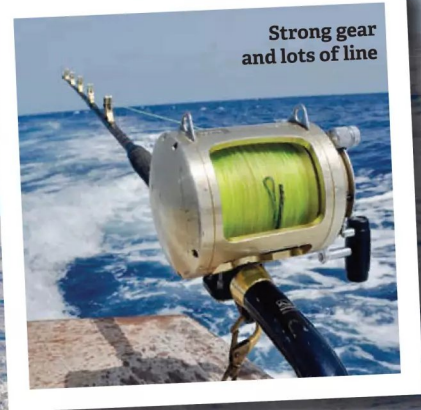
A lot of blue marlin are encountered off the Pacific coast of Central America, but these are generally fish of 100lb to 400lb. Productive areas include Mexico's Baja Peninsula, along with Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama. Small to medium size blues are caught throughout the Caribbean, where destinations include the US Virgin Islands, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cayman Islands and most of the Windward Islands.

Mauritius in the Indian Ocean produces big fish and Kenya can be hugely productive too. Blues are plentiful around the Seychelles and Maldives but finding a suitable offshore game boat is not as easy as at other destinations.

It is at the mid-oceanic islands where most of the biggest Atlantic blues are caught, especially Cape Verde, Bermuda, Madeira, the Azores, Canary Islands and the Algarve in Portugal. Ascension Island is another outstanding destination, possibly the most consistent of all, though sport fishing here is currently unavailable. ■



The number one billfish



Strong gear and lots of line





Gethyn Owen at the helm



From boat international to top skipper

THE BIG INTERVIEW

GETHYN OWEN



The local waters produced plenty of thornback rays

Smoothhounds are a personal favourite

As a young lad he fished his local rocks, but discovered boat angling and gained international honours before becoming a charter skipper

WITH A PASSION FOR THE sea, a love of fishing and a desire to lead a life of his own choosing, you could say Gethyn Owen seemed destined to forge a career as a leading charter boat skipper. Like many, his angling started in childhood and his route to becoming

a successful skipper took in international boat angling as part of the Wales team. Now he is best known for running his boat My Way, based in Holyhead, North Wales.

Having fished with Geth for quite a few years, I've got to know him well. Along the way I've caught some great fish and made many new friends fishing alongside his regular anglers.

Q An obvious question, but who or what got you into angling and when? Did they have the most influence on your angling or did that come from another source?

Gethyn Owen: I think coming from Anglesey and living within a few minutes walking distance or short bike ride to the beach and a variety of rock marks, most children growing up locally were interested in fishing. I have a faint memory of my Taid (grandfather in Welsh) giving me my first rod and reel – an old Shakespeare beachcaster with a Mitchell 624 reel, the white one with the distinctive round handle grip.

I used to cycle from our house in Penrhos to Salt Island to dig ragworms, then cycle home, tackle up, grab some additional frozen bait and then get back on the bike to travel the few miles to Trearddur Bay. I fished the many prolific rock marks available in the area for pollack, wrasse, bull huss, rays and many more. It was a good grounding, and it formed my basic fishing education.

Q You made a very successful transfer from pleasure angler to the international boat team with Wales. What stands out about the actions you needed to take, as an individual, to achieve that big leap?

GO: The greatest influence in my angling came much later in life from Robbie Roberts. He was the secretary of the ABC Sea Angling Club and the manager of the Welsh National Boat Angling squad. I was very fortunate that the club was steeped in a great tradition of producing some of

the best match anglers in Wales on both the small boat and international competition scene. Robbie is a very capable angler and under his tutelage I was able to improve my angling quickly.

Needless to say, most of the club's fun trips turned into mini matches, either for most species, heaviest fish or small points competitions. It was usually a fiver in the pot each. Never being one to shy away, it made me extra eager to succeed and beat some of the talented anglers.

I found it was the attention to detail on rigs and bait presentation that I really needed to improve. I was always enthusiastic and took time in what I did, but after watching the meticulous manner in how the top anglers prepared I knew I needed to adapt quickly and really think through my preparation.

Q Was becoming a charter boat skipper always in the back of your mind, and if so, how difficult was it to achieve that ambition?

GO: I think, in the back of most boat anglers' minds lurks the idea of owning and running your own charter boat. Life on the sea, fishing, it's a dream job for many of us. It wasn't really a hard decision.

The hardest part was the business plan, financing the move from a normal job in industry to the sea, and not forgetting convincing the family that we could make it work. It took a few years of back-and-forth ideas before I finally made the decisive move.

I had the basic idea formed in my head, but needed to find a boat, and start planning the business model by using my own experiences of fishing and competitions, then adapting them all to life aboard my own vessel.

Q You once told me that the hour before your anglers arrive when you ready the boat for the day is your special time. Can you explain?

GO: My time indeed! If we're sailing at 9am, I cannot arrive at 8.45am turn the key and steam off. My day starts at the boat 60-90 minutes before sail time. I may have rods and reels to set up for novices, My Way 2 may need fuelling, or maybe a few other jobs as there is always something calling. But, more importantly, there are my daily checks on the engine, oil and water levels, and a quick look around to double check, then start the engine and check the electronics and communications to ensure all is well.

I'm a morning person and am often up around 5-6am. I take the dogs for a walk, may need to sort bait out for the day ahead and I may have a few jobs to do on the boat. With all that done, it's then my time – cup of coffee & breakfast – before our anglers arrive and we head off for the day. I like that little calm to gather my thoughts and prepare for the day ahead.

Q We anglers roll up, chuck our gear on deck and off we go, but what's the unseen workload a skipper has to put in on regular basis to keep the business running smoothly?

GO: There is so much unseen work that skippers do, such as general maintenance to keep their boats in top condition. All charter boats fall under the MCA Code of Practise and are licensed every year. We have to ensure that the boats are always

A fine brace of double-figure pollack on My Way 2



within specification, keeping up to date with all requirements and meeting our safety obligations to our crews.

Of course, there are regular services to maintain the engine, and fuelling. Two or three times a year, boats are hauled out to check stern gear and to antifoul. There is typically always something to do, not just what is seen on deck when at sea. We also have to keep on top of the paperwork related to the business. This all pays dividends in helping you run an efficient, effective business and providing an enjoyable experience for the anglers.

Q You see a wide range of anglers. Generally, what one thing could anglers do for themselves to improve their catches when they go charter boat fishing?

GO: All anglers have ideas about how to catch certain species, the best baits and favourite rig. But ask your skipper about these things. Styles do vary around the country and what you

favour in one locality may not always work in a different port. Tides, terrain and natural food availability can all change at times and you often need a specific tweak to your terminal tackle and bait arrangement to maximise your chances.

This applies day to day too. I see anglers fish one style, but if it's not working I'll step in and suggest they change. I want to see my anglers catch, that's the ultimate for me and for most other skippers.

Q What's the most common mistake you see your anglers make?

GO: I see anglers step aboard having purchased the latest rod or reel and then delve into the tackle box for the rustiest hooks and swivels. All too often they have the last trip's refrozen bait. Your terminal tackle and bait are what catches the fish and failure to prepare these to the best of your ability is asking for failure. No amount of money spent on a rod and reel will compensate for poor quality rigs or bait.

Happy customers with a catch of wreck pollack



Q When you get a day off from the business, what specific type of fishing would be your first choice?

GO: I love smoothhounds. At Holyhead we're blessed to have some of the best hound fishing in the country. They are regularly caught over that magical 20lb weight. Fishing in relatively shallow water and not too much tide means we can often scale down our rods to the bare minimum. Light spinning rods, tipster rods and the like really get that adrenalin flowing when a big hard-fighting hound hits the bait and heads for the horizon.

I enjoyed shore fishing as a young lad but would never say I was overly dedicated. I enjoy an occasional day coarse fishing. Again, not a mad passion, but there's something very rewarding to be had after a hectic period aboard My Way 2. Setting up at our local fishery, throwing a couple of baits out and then sitting back relaxing with some wonderful scenery does have great benefits. My wife Trish enjoys that too, although she can stand there all day with a match pole catching small roach and bream while I much prefer to put the line in the bite alarm and sit back with a book and chill.

Q Becoming a charter boat skipper is not easy with the cost of purchasing a boat, safety equipment and certification. What would be your advice to a young person with a long-term dream of running a charter boat business?

GO: Becoming a charter skipper and maintaining your asset and business is not a cheap affair. So many times, you hear the comment that it is a great job, getting paid a few hundred a day to go fishing, but it really isn't that simple. I don't deny it's a great job. However, the running costs can be worryingly high. Berthing fees, insurance, equipment upgrades, regular

services, fuel costs, they all mount up. Then you have to factor in the weather. If you have a week or two of bad weather, it soon cancels out the profits from the previous good weeks. Running a seasonal business is full of financial peaks and troughs and you really need to manage that cashflow carefully and always be prepared for the worst case scenario.

Any aspiring young skipper needs to take all this into account. It took me a long while to develop my business plan and forecast as best I could what could be achieved by operating from Holyhead. Although Holyhead has always been a successful fishing port, whether I could make it work was a different thing.

You must take into account every business overhead in conjunction with the need to earn a living as well. Be genuine in your income requirements. Talking to local skippers is a must because they have the experience of their port. There are a number of excellent young skippers around the UK, but the average age of skippers in general is increasing.

Q How do you see charter boat fishing developing over the next 20 years and beyond?

GO: Years back there were many angling clubs, working men's clubs and groups from industrial companies all over the UK, but in the past two decades these have slowly disbanded as memberships dwindle and big businesses cease to exist or get swallowed up by other companies. I used to take many club bookings when I first started in 2004, but they are fewer each year but, at the same time, my bookings haven't reduced because I get more individual and small group bookings.

Charter boat angling has a future, of that I am in no doubt. However, it has declined over the last decade and there are certainly not as many boats operating. The world is changing, and those clubs were also social occasions with meetings at the local pub and often family experiences. With modern technology, mobile phones and social media, people are in greater touch than



Geth enjoys using ultra-light gear

they ever were before. I see the same faces return together aboard My Way 2 regularly – not a club in name anymore, but still a club in the shared interests of friendship and fishing.

Q Your boat, My Way, is always a deck full of laughter and banter. I remember trying to be serious while on board filming for Pure Fishing and whilst working to camera and unbeknown to me I've had an Action Man and a fluffy chicken work its way into the screen shot. Do you have a favourite funny story?

GO: Ah, yes, guilty as charged there. We are there to have fun and enjoy a great experience together. I think one of my favourite stories was from September 2016, one that had been in the planning for a while but never deployed. It was a warm sunny day and a regular had forgotten his suntan lotion. I said I had a couple bottles in the cabin, one was a Factor 50 block, the other a special slightly tinted seafarers sun block that I used regularly. I then rubbed some on my arm to show willing. He took the bottle and rubbed it over his face, a few hours later he did the same again. The bottle was St Moritz tanning mousse and Keith left the boat that evening looking like he'd spent a shift down the local coalmine. A few others have fallen to that gag over the years.

Q If you could fish just one dream destination in the world or travel to target one species, where and what would you choose?

GO: I've always fancied Panama or Costa Rica with blue skies, warm seas and golden sands. Species would be rooster fish, dorado and grouper because of their fighting abilities. ■

My Way 2 and its distinctive red hull





PARTY TIME FOR PLAICE

They're back, so brush up your skills with our quick guide to these flatties

WITH THE ARRIVAL OF spring, more daylight and gradually increasing sea temperatures, it means the start of a new plaice season.

These popular fish are often caught over generally clean ground, especially in the vicinity of beds of seed mussels. Being specific, most plaice caught in the UK come from sand and shingle banks. The famous Skerries off Dartmouth in South Devon and the Shambles off Weymouth in Dorset are two of the best-known marks, yet, increasingly, many good plaice are taken off Sussex and the south coast of Kent, along with the northern sector of the Irish Sea off the coast of Cumbria.

During spring and following spawning offshore, plaice move inshore to recover and consequently feed ravenously, and, as a result, at times huge

catches of fish can be made. However, those early season plaice are generally thin and make poor eating, so these are best handled with care and returned alive to the sea. Here the fish quickly recover their condition, and some of the best fishing for them is in summer but sport reaches a peak in the autumn.

IDENTIFICATION

Some anglers might confuse plaice with flounders or dabs. Plaice are typically brown skinned with their back covered in bright orange or red spots, and while occasionally a flounder can have reddish spots, they lack the distinct bony ridge behind the eyes that are a key identification feature of plaice. Dabs have rough skin on their back, and when held up to the light appear transparent.

Caught on light and sporting tackle, plaice can give a reasonable account of themselves. The average size caught at most locations around the British Isles is from 1-3lb, with the majority of anglers regarding fish weighing over 4-5lb as being a specimen. The current British boat-caught record is held with a fish that weighed 10lb 3oz 8dr, caught in 1974 at Longa Sound in Scotland, though much bigger fish have been boated commercially in the UK.

As with so many other species, Norway is probably the best destination for very big plaice, with the Norwegian record is held by a huge fish of 5.7kg, just over 12lb 8oz. Not surprisingly, an increasing number of anglers who fish in Norway are starting to target plaice, with impressive results.

TACKLE & RIG

The ideal tackle set up for plaice fishing is a 6/12lb-class boat rod matched with a multiplier reel loaded with monofilament or braid.

Such an outfit is perfect for fishing in generally shallow water with a light to modest run of tide. Often it is not possible to fish using such light tackle because a combination of deep water and fast tides necessitates the use of heavier tackle. In many areas conditions dictate the need for a 12/20lb



Adorn the hooklength with bright beads



Plaice have distinctive orange/red spots

or even 20/30lb-class boat rod, in the latter case when fishing deep water with strong tides. As with many other forms of boat angling, an increasing number of experienced UK anglers are switching to long continental style boat rods rigged with a fixed-spool reel.

The traditional rig for catching plaice is a long flowing trace, its hooklength adorned with colourful beads and sequins, and probably a spoon, all of which provide plenty of flash and colour that certainly seems to attract the fish.

Hooklengths range from six to 12 feet, although some anglers go much longer. The golden rule is the shallower the water the longer the trace, shortening the length progressively as the depth increases to help minimise tangles.

A flat-sided lead weight, such as the circular, studded watch type, is ideal for plaice fishing because it hugs the bottom perfectly when drifting. A good tip when drifts are fast is to use a small, drilled bullet on the hooklength to ensure the bait is dragging hard the bottom, which is where the fish want it.

Anglers love catching plaice, and they make good eating too



BAIT & TACTICS

Plaice can be caught with almost any bait. In Ireland, for example, anglers use little more than long thin cuts of fresh mackerel (there's a good alternative on page 42). Most plaice anglers prefer cocktails of three, four or more different components, with favourites being squid, ragworms, a peeler crab, a long fillet of sandeel or launce and any type of shellfish, especially mussels and razorfish.

Usually, plaice baits are rigged to be tadpole shaped, that is they feature a bulbous body and a long flowing tail. It is important to make sure that the point of the hook, generally a long-shank Aberdeen hook such as the Sakuma 430 between size 1 and 3/0, cannot become masked by the bait.

The general method is for the boat to drift over the area to be fished. At the start of the drift, lower your bait slowly down to the bottom to ensure it does not twist and tangle during the descent. When you feel the lead weight tap on the bottom, allow line to steadily pour off the reel until the angle of line between the seabed and the rod tip is approximately 45 degrees, but reduce the angle on fast drifts, and increase it on slower drifts.

Check the flow of line from the reel spool with your thumb, but do not re-engage the spool. You should be able to feel the sinker steadily trundling across the seabed. As soon as you feel a bite, generally a hard rattle on the rod tip, lift your thumb and allow line to pour freely from the spool, to ensure the bait does not get dragged away from the interested fish. After 20-30 seconds, check the flow of line with your thumb. If the fish has taken the bait, you should feel a steady weight come on to the rod tip. At this point re-engage the spool, allow the line to tighten and set the hook by lifting the rod. If the fish is not hooked, free-spooling a second time might induce another bite. ■




**NEW SERIES:
SMALL-BOAT
OWNERSHIP
- PART 6**

LAUNCH SAFELY

Learn the necessary skills
for beach launching and
recovering a small boat

IN AN IDEAL WORLD IT SHOULD never be necessary to drive on to sand to launch a boat with its obvious risk of the vehicle or boat trailer becoming stuck. My first choice would be to launch and retrieve from a concrete ramp and not to drive on the intertidal zone.

However, with care and a little experience it is possible to safely launch and retrieve on many sandy beaches. This is just as well because there are many areas of coastline that do not have designated launch sites and, invariably, these include those areas closest to the most productive fishing grounds.

The optimum time to launch or retrieve on most beaches is usually during the period midway between high and low water, where not only is the sand usually relatively firm, but also this will be where the beach is often at its steepest incline. It is invariably the time around high and low water, and especially on large spring tides, that is the most troublesome to attempt to launch on many sandy beaches, because this is where the sand is at its softest.

Of course, conditions vary considerably from beach to beach and the important advice is to gain as much local knowledge as possible before



Check the launch area
for any obstructions

you launch your vessel. Ideally visit a potential new launch site at low water prior to launching in order to identify any hazards such as isolated patches of rock or soft mud.

GETTING OUT

It is always sensible to spend the minimum time with your towing vehicle on the beach. With this in mind, it is best to prepare the boat for launching from the safety of hard ground above the high water mark. Beach launching

will always be safest when using a vehicle with four-wheel drive and, perhaps best of all, when working as a team of two or three with other boaters so that you have the manpower and vehicles to help out should anyone experience a problem.

If the tide is ebbing you can drive almost to the water's edge, unhitch the trailer, push it into the sea and quickly launch the boat. If the tide is flooding do not drive all the way to the water's edge, but instead stop perhaps 20 metres away and push the trailer from there. If one of the



Reverse the trailer to the water's edge



trailer's wheels sink into soft sand or mud and becomes stuck, use a rope to pull it out using the towing vehicle. Always have a strong rope with you and readily available for immediate use.

A perfectly flat calm sea is ideal but, on many occasions, you will be confronted with waves breaking on to the beach. Beyond these waves the sea conditions are often good, but first you have to run the gauntlet of choppy conditions, with a danger of your boat becoming swamped during launching. The trick is to use the waves to your advantage by attempting to get the nearest ones to lift the boat off the trailer. Then, as soon as the vessel is floating, push it clear to prevent them from bashing the hull against the trailer and damaging the gel coat.

With the boat launched, one person needs to drag the trailer back out of the water, re-hitch it to the towing vehicle, and park both safely above the high water mark. Meanwhile someone stays with the boat ensuring the bow is facing directly into any waves, which makes it much easier to control. This also helps prevent the worse scenario facing a beach launch, namely waves breaking over the transom or gunnels and swamping the boat. ▶



If a trailer wheel sinks, tow it out



Wrong – the bow should not face the sea



Correct – push the the boat stern first into the sea



Leave one person to hold the boat...



...while the others remove the trailer

Attach the winch rope to the bow of the boat



BEACH RECOVERY

It is always best to time your recovery of the boat to coincide with the water being at the optimum height to facilitate as easy a retrieve as possible at that particular beach. It is when winching the boat back on to the trailer that its wheels are most likely to become bogged down in soft sand. If the tide is flooding you will be under pressure to get things sorted out as soon as possible, or else you will have to relaunch the boat and start all over again.

Avoid using your trailer's anchor rope as a tow rope because you need to avoid any risk of damaging it. However, if you are unable to get the towing vehicle close enough to the trailer you may have to use the anchor rope. Attach the rope to the winch post on the front of the trailer and secure the other end to the ball hitch of the towing vehicle, then slowly attempt to drive the trailer free.

If this is successful, keep driving up the beach until the trailer wheels are on firmer ground. If the trailer wheels are stuck really firm, driving at a slight angle is usually more effective than pulling in a straight line, as this has the effect of levering the wheel out.



One winches, the other guides the vessel



Once in position, winch it on to the trailer



Secure the boat next to the winch post



Connect the tow rope to your vehicle

CHANGING CONDITIONS

On many occasions you might start the day launching your boat into a flat calm sea, only to be confronted with breaking waves when you return later. If this is the case, approach the beach slowly in the boat and at an angle of about 90 degrees to the waterline (that is with the waves directly behind). Keep the boat moving at the same speed as the waves to prevent them overtaking you.

Time your final approach on to the beach so that you ride in just behind one wave, with the engine trimmed up as far as possible to maintain propulsion and steerage. Be ready to cut the engine and jump out as soon the boat glides on to the sand, and then immediately turn the boat to ensure the bow is facing into the waves.

If conditions really are too bad, I strongly suggest you either wait until things improve (if this is an option) or even find another location to recover your boat.

One thing to avoid at all costs is changing your mind once you have committed to running the boat on to the beach. As you are making the final approach among breaking waves, do not change your mind at the last moment. If you do, it is likely that you will lose control as soon as you turn beam on to the waves to attempt to drive back out into deeper water and the boat will get swamped. ■



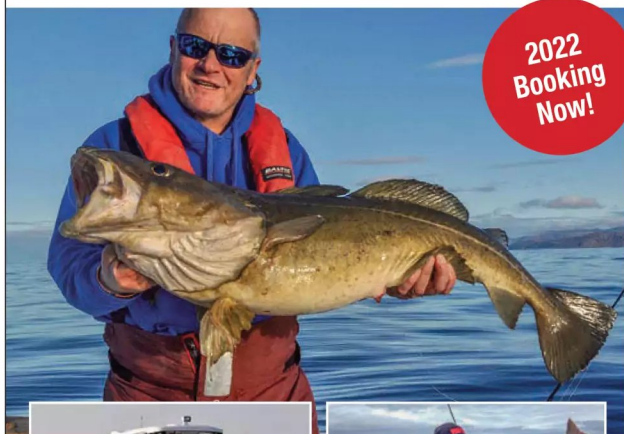
Pull the trailer from the sea and drive off the beach

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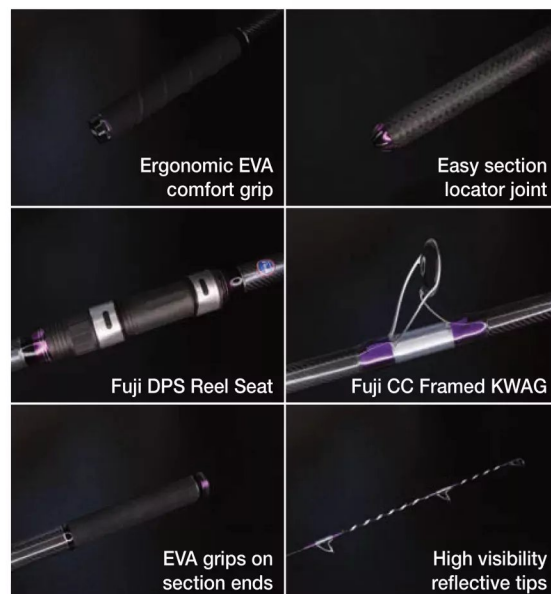


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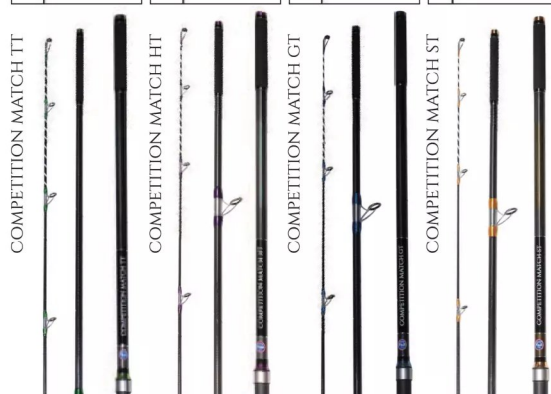
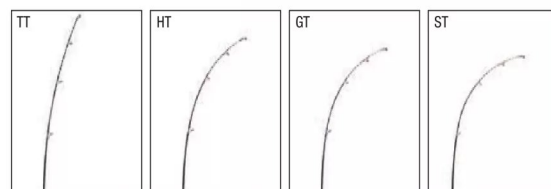
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Q&A

SHORE ANGLING

ASK THE EXPERTS

When sending your question, please remember to include your name and address



PAUL FENECH

Shore angler and tackle expert Paul is here to solve your shore angling problems.



DAVE LEWIS

Based in Newport, South Wales, our contributing editor Dave answers boat fishing questions.



MARK CRAME

Suffolk-based Mark gets a thrill from fishing afloat on a kayak. Send him your kayaking queries.



HENRY GILBEY

Angler and photo-journalist Henry, based in Cornwall, will answer questions on lure angling.



DAN SISSONS

The Portsmouth angler will provide answers on the sport of light rock fishing (LRF), the go-anywhere tactic.

HOW TO ASK A US QUESTION

■ Email: sa.ed@kelsey.co.uk
or online: www.facebook.com/seaanglermag

WINNING QUESTION

Q I have been fishing for over 50 years and have only recently heard of cart. Can you tell me what it is and where to find it?

JAMES PEGRUM, CUMBRIA

PF says: Cart is the inner meat and all-important coral found inside an edible hen crab. The coral consists of the eggs carried and then stored inside the crab. It's easily recognisable by its distinct orange colour. Rather than harvest their own, most anglers prefer to buy the crabs from a fishmonger, or a fisherman who works crab pots.

HOW TO MAKE CART

1: Remember to only use edible hen crabs that are of legal size. These sizes can vary somewhat, but are generally 130-140mm across the back.



2: Pull away the shell and carapace to reveal the flesh and coral inside the crab.



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Rapala®



3: Remove the wings and coral and place on some kitchen towel to dry.



4: Wrap in clingfilm, making sure to remove any air to prevent freezer burn, and store in your freezer.

Q I'm thinking of fishing a beach called Penmaenmawr in Conwy, North Wales. It's a long sandy beach and rather featureless. Would it be worthwhile walking the beach at low tide to look for any features?

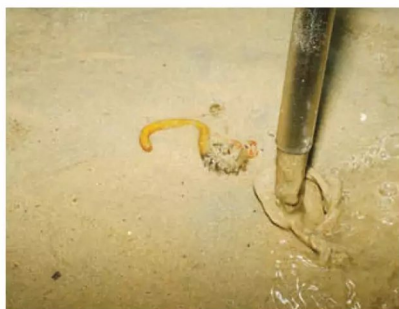
WILL JOHNSON, SYCHDYN, FLINTSHIRE

PF says: It's always a good idea to walk any venue at low tide to discover any features such as rocks, gullies and sand bars. Some beaches offer nothing other than miles and miles of flat sand, shallow water and a tiny surf.

Penmaenmawr is certainly a venue that offers nothing in the way of features, but it still produces some good catches during the right conditions. During spring and into summer it will produce good catches of dogfish and rays as well as the occasional bull huss. Autumn sees whiting, bass and the a few codling being caught too.

Rather than beach craft, you will certainly need to choose the right tides and conditions here, and that all comes with experience of fishing any venue.





Q When buying a bait pump, what should I look for in terms of diameter, the type of worms I'm targeting and the type of ground to try?

KELVIN JONES, SWANSEA

PF says: The majority of anglers who use a bait pump for collecting worms generally target yellowtail or black lug from soft, sandy beaches. These worms differ from a blow lug as they are found in a vertical position while blow lug tend to be in a U shape between the cast and a blow hole.

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Many years ago, bait pumps that had a huge diameter of around 50mm were used but these sucked up more sand than worms. Nowadays, bait pumps with a diameter of around 22mm are far more effective because they lift very little sand and get to the worm quicker.

It does take practice to use a bait pump, but once you get the hang of it, you can collect a lot of black lug very quickly.



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T&Cs: * One prize per winning question will be chosen by the editor. Prizes cannot be exchanged and no correspondence will be looked into. We reserve the right to send alternative prizes.

Q I was led to believe that by wearing a flotation suit, it would save my life and have since heard it could be more of a problem instead. Is this true?

GAV JONES, HOLYHEAD, ANGLESEY

PF says: Flotation suits will do exactly that – keep you afloat – but they may not necessarily keep you alive. If someone enters the water while being unconscious and wearing one of these suits, there is a real possibility that person could end up floating face down in the water.

A flotation suit cannot be relied upon to keep you upright. However, a lifejacket will keep you afloat and ultimately keep you upright too, even if unconscious.

Some anglers suddenly feel confident of going to marks during rough seas simply because they are wearing a flotation suit. Even if wearing a PFD or flotation suit, risks should never be taken.





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Q&A

LIGHT ROCK FISHING

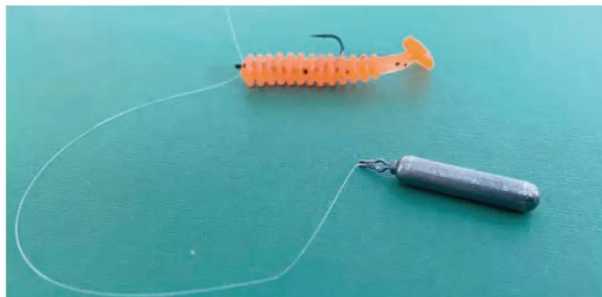
Q: I am stocking up on metal jigs ready for the new season and I wondered which shapes I should use at various times?

GAVIN NOAKES, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

DS says: I can't wait to get back on the metals too because there are times when they easily out-fish all other methods.

Wider jigs or 'slow jigs' will fall more slowly and give the fish more time to see the lure. Longer, slimmer jigs can be fished much faster and can trigger a reaction from fish that are more lethargic or reluctant to feed.

If you locate active feeding fish, then try to match the baitfish where possible. If your lures come with trebles, consider switching them for single assist hooks because this makes releasing fish a much easier task.



Q: How can I stop my lure falling through the water head first when paired with a jighead? It doesn't look very realistic but I need the weight to cast.

PAUL IRWIN, GATESHEAD, TYNE & WEAR

DS says: You want your lure to look good enough to eat the minute it hits the water and this is especially important in shallow clear water.

There are many ways to counter your problem but you will need to tailor your approach to each lure you use. Firstly you can try controlling the fall by keeping a tight line and the rod tip high when your lure hits the water and allow the lure to 'curve' back towards you.

Try to experiment with your line choice to allow for a lighter jighead. There are heads available that spread the weight across the lure to give a more horizontal fall. The longer the jighead weight the less likely it is to fall nose first.



Q: I've seen lots about the dropshot rig being used primarily in LRF. What is the best way of tying this rig and how is it so effective if the hook is fished off the bottom?

JAMES PRITCHETT, CADNAM, HAMPSHIRE

DS says: The dropshot rig, which is easily tied, covers many bases. Weights and hooks are interchangeable so it becomes very flexible and is also a great way to keep the lure out of the rough stuff.

I use a dropper loop knot and pull the eye of the hook back into the knot to ensure the hook stays rigid. There are specific dropshot knots that are based on the Palomar.

Where this rig comes into its own is holding a lure at a specific depth, which is a killer method for wrasse species, pollack and many other fish. It also allows the lure to be unaffected by weight so it will sit more naturally.

If you want to present a lure just above the weed/rocks while fishing under your rod tip alongside a harbour wall for example, the dropshot rig is very hard to beat.

Q&A

LURE FISHING

Q: I like the idea of some of these soft plastics, but surely bass prefer lures which seem to do lots in the water?

ALFIE MCMULLAN, YEOVIL, SOMERSET



HG says: Not that long ago I thought exactly the same as you. It makes so much sense to us that the more disturbance and 'come and eat me' action our lures make in the water, then the more bass want to smash them. But is this actually the case? Well, I'm not so sure these days. My increased use of soft plastics for bass fishing has led me down this road of less so often being more.

Anglers love to see a lure jingling and jangling underwater, but what do the fish want? By no means am I saying that your regular diving hard lures, which tend to cast so well, aren't useful anymore because they are. But too many times for it to be a fluke, I have been fishing with a hard lure and caught nothing until I change to a soft plastic with a subtler and quieter action, and then it's bass on.

I carry a range of lures that give me different options, but without doubt I fish with more soft plastics than before. In calmer conditions especially, I will often use nothing else.

You can get plenty of action out of a big heavy paddletail soft plastic, which thumps away in a run of current or in rougher water, but then you can clip on something like a DoLive Stick or one of the Savage Gear Gravity Stick Pulsetail soft plastics and now we are talking about something nice and subtle and quiet, and I really like this.



You are going to need to fish a little slower and more deliberately, so the more feel and touch you can get the better.

I believe that less lure action in the dark is a good thing as well, but again from our this makes little sense. Our head wants to say hang on, it's dark, so let's give the fish more so they can home in on our lures. Now I say give them less because I believe you will catch more bass at night like this.

We are learning all the time and that is what makes lure fishing so fascinating.



Q: I use a 3ft rubbing leader of approximately 20lb when fishing lures and plugs for bass and pollack. I attach this to my mainline using a small but strong swivel but would a knot be stronger than a swivel?

KEITH MCALLISTER, PORTBALLINTRAE, COUNTY ANTRIM,

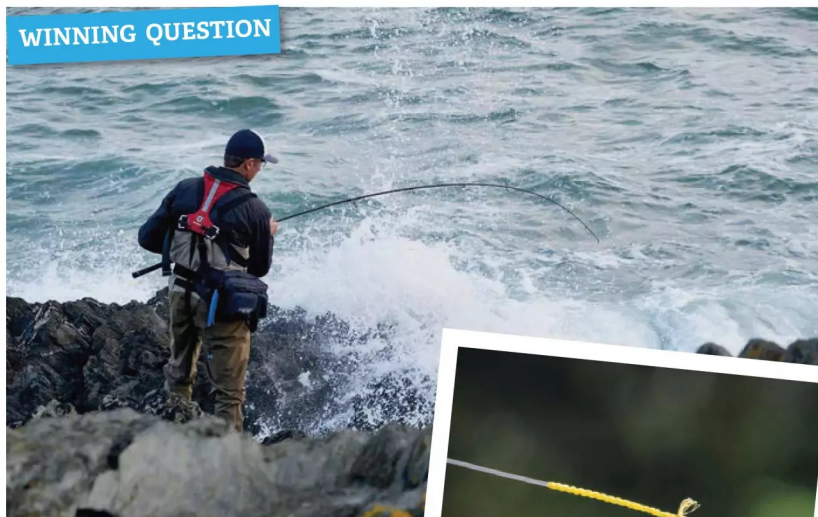
HG says: There is absolutely no need for a swivel to attach your rubbing leader to your mainline. To me it's a potential weak point (two extra knots required) and I don't want a swivel, however small, smashing into my tip ring if I bring my lure in that bit too far.

Those little swivels are small and strong but I don't like the way a swivel can slightly hinge some lures that you need to work, such as smaller surface patterns.

If you learn a leader knot or two then that's the way I to go. The strongest leader knot I know of for this sort of fishing is called the FG knot. While it looks complicated it's like anything else — get used to tying it and it becomes much easier. It creates an incredibly strong connection between your leader and braid mainline.

If the FG knot is too much for you to get involved with, then have a look at the uni-to-uni knot. I would use this rather than the Improved Albright, which is also an easy to tie leader knot, although I think the uni-to-uni is a stronger connection

WINNING QUESTION



but not nearly as strong as the FG. The uni-to-uni is the in between knot — plenty strong enough for our fishing and very easy to tie.



Q: I've tried surface fishing with a Patchinko and a Savage Gear popper and I also used a shallow diving minnow, but blanked. Do I need to go deeper even though I have seen bass jumping?

ANTHONY, LLANDUDNO, CONWY

HG says: I know how exciting it is to see fish jumping, but they could be mullet. Bass might sometimes thrash about when they are hooked, but they are not generally a fish which jumps. Even though mullet don't often jump, they do so on the open coast especially, and they are probably the species you saw.

The good news though is that bass and mullet are often found in similar areas. I love surface fishing for bass as much as the next angler, but I do

wonder if at times these lures can put fish down deeper. I'd be inclined to go sub-surface if you are getting no action, and if you can get a subtler soft plastic out to the fish then all the better.

I don't know how deep the ground is but try to fish a bit deeper below the fish you are seeing. Instead of casting straight at the fish and possibly spooking them, aim beyond any signs of activity and then bring your lure back into the main area.

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Q&A

BOAT ANGLING

WINNING QUESTION

Q: Could you tell me how to use a T-bar disgorger properly? I try to return as many fish as possible but still struggle to use this so-called simple tool.

CARL DODDS, EXMOUTH, DEVON

DL says: The biggest mistake most anglers make when first attempting to operate a T-bar is to use it as a disgorger. To work a T-bar effectively you need to develop a knack which may seem illogical at first, but if you persevere you'll find a little bit of practice makes unhooking fish very easy.

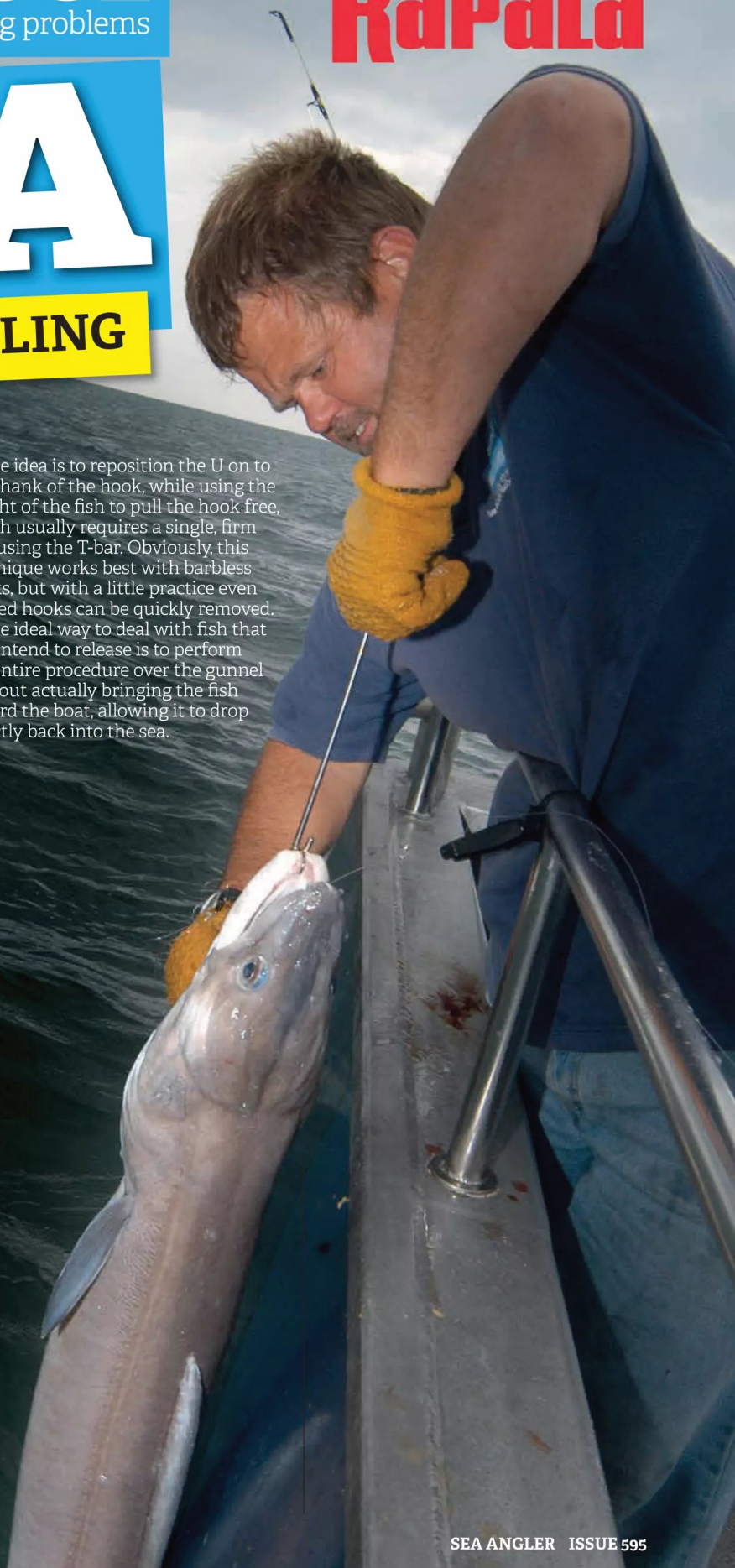
A big advantage with using a T-bar is that if you intend releasing the fish you do not actually need to handle it, therefore preventing any possible damage to delicate internal organs and the removal of protective slime or scales. Further, if you use a T-bar, you minimise the risk of injury to yourself from the fish's teeth, spikes or spines.

A right-handed person should hold the T-bar in the right hand, while taking a few wraps of the hooklength around the left hand, leaving the fish hanging free. Remember do not touch the fish. Hook the U at the end of the T-bar around the leader, then with a single movement pull down with the left hand while raising the right, ensuring the hooklength remains within the U at the end of the bar.

The idea is to reposition the U on to the shank of the hook, while using the weight of the fish to pull the hook free, which usually requires a single, firm jerk using the T-bar. Obviously, this technique works best with barbless hooks, but with a little practice even barbed hooks can be quickly removed.

The ideal way to deal with fish that you intend to release is to perform the entire procedure over the gunnel without actually bringing the fish aboard the boat, allowing it to drop directly back into the sea.

Unhook the fish at the side of the boat



Q: This year I would love to add brill to my species list. Where is the best place to achieve this, and what are the most effective techniques?

DAVID GROVES, ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE

DL says: The brill is a member of the turbot family and is found in exactly the same areas as the turbot, so when you are fishing for one of these species you are also fishing for the other.

For identification purposes, the top surface of both species is usually pale to sandy brown in colour, with a few lights spots and raised nodules, but brill have a more oval-shaped body and, with a little experience, they are fairly easy to distinguish from turbot which are more circular in shape.

Most brill are caught over or in the very near vicinity of sand or shingle banks, typically those which are subjected to a very strong run of tide. Key areas for catching brill include the famous Shambles Bank off Weymouth, and Skerries off Dartmouth. Increasingly ground off the Sussex coast has been producing good quality fish. The numerous banks found around the Channel Islands, notably Alderney, also offer fantastic brill fishing.

In many areas where brill are found, the ideal outfit to target them would be 12/20lb-class, though when fishing in deeper water with a strong run of tide a 20/30lb rod might be more suitable. If fishing at anchor in shallower water, an uptider is ideal.

The most effective rig for catching brill is invariably the running leger with a flowing trace in the region of 6-12ft being effective. Many anglers add spoons or other attractors, such as coloured muppets, to their brill rigs, and it is likely these do in some degree contribute to their success.

Hooklengths should be cut from at least 50-60lb monofilament to ensure they can handle the strain of holding a large flatfish in a strong tide, as there will always be a likelihood of hooking a large turbot over the same ground. Likewise, hooks should be strong and, of course, sharp. Depending on the size of bait, expect to use hooks from around 2/0 to 4/0. The brill has a huge mouth, so hooks such as the Sakuma Manta pattern are perfect.

Brill can be caught on a wide range of baits, but the species clearly has a penchant for fish. Live sandeels, especially launce if available, are deadly when used over sandbanks. Frozen sandeels are a very effective alternative. Other excellent baits include fillets of mackerel or herring, and also squid.

The general method used to catch brill is to fish on the drift. Drifting ensures your bait slowly rolls across the banks or ground where the fish

The brill is an oval-shaped fish



A mackerel strip imitates a sandeel

are located, a technique that is highly effective when trying to find isolated pocket of fish. It is important to ensure your bait is fishing hard on the seabed. Lower your rig down slowly until you feel the lead weight tap on the bottom, then allow line to pour freely off the spool as the boat continues to drift. After a while, check the flow of line with your thumb and you should feel the weight dragging across the bottom.

Keep the reel in free spool with your thumb on the spool, then as soon as you feel a bite, usually a distinct thump on the rod tip, allow line to run freely off the spool to prevent the bait from getting dragged away from the fish. After about 15-20 seconds check the flow of line with your thumb and allow it to tighten slowly, then re-engage the reel spool and set the hook by lifting your rod.

If fishing at anchor, casting rigs away from the boat or dropping them straight back downtide and allowing the tide to very slowly drag the bait across the bottom is another very effective technique for catching brill.

The turbot has a more circular shape



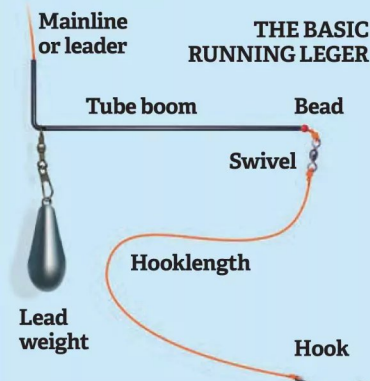
Q: What is the best rig to use when boat fishing for bass?

ISAAC MORRIS, BY EMAIL

DL says: Everything depends on exactly where, when and how you fish for bass.

Under most circumstances basic no-frills rigs, such as a simple running leger, will be effective when targeting bass afloat with either bait or a lure. Some anglers like to float fish with bait too.

A running leger is simple to make. Slide a tube boom on your mainline or leader, followed by a bead and tie on a swivel. Attach your hooklength to the other eye of the swivel. Add a suitable hook at the end of the mono hooklength.



Q&A

KAYAK FISHING

Q: Could you suggest a tackle set up for each of the various styles of fishing from a kayak? DALE PETERS, SHERINGHAM, NORFOLK

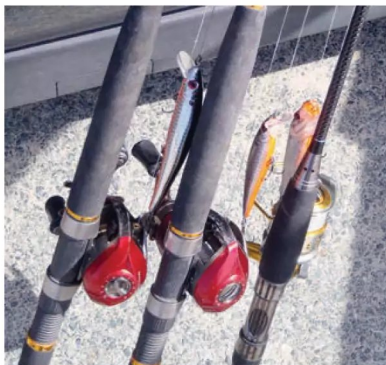
MC says: I'll concentrate on downtiding, lure fishing and drifting because uptiding is unnecessary, not particularly easy and potentially dangerous from a kayak. Not only that, the low scare area around a kayak, due to being very buoyant and with little displacement makes it far less of an issue than when fishing from a larger boat.

For downtide bait fishing I favour rods of around 7ft long fitted with multiplier reels (pictured above) because they are compact and hardwearing on a kayak.

A rod in the region of 12-20lb allows for a bit of sport and a bit of grunt and can be used for anything from whiting to tope and is a manageable length while still allowing you to lead a running fish around the bow. I always use braid and my choice is 50lb because the diameter is a bit more resilient than the 20lb braid I would use if going pound for pound against mono. I need a six ounce to eight ounce lead weight to hold bottom locally, due to the two-three knot currents. I favour breakout versions as they hold in the bottom yet pull out of most snags.

Most of the time I use rigs with 30lb flourocarbon with either a size 2/0 or 4/0 Pennell on a running leger, occasionally opting for a wishbone rig.

The rods are set into forward-facing tube rod holders, which allow me to see every bite and strike quickly.



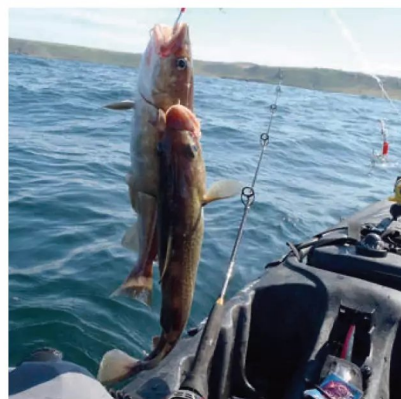
When lure fishing I go trolling rather than casting. Again, I opt for 7ft rods, in the 10-20g range but fitted with baitcasters (pictured above) because I enjoy their low profile and light weight. Always set your drag. These reels carry 50lb braid because I fish alongside rocky breakwaters and this gives me some abrasion resistance. I tie my lures directly to the braid rather than using clips and have one rod on each side from the flush-mounted rod holders.

As I paddle slowly, I look at each rod tip in turn to ensure that they are vibrating with the movement of the lure (if they stop, chances are they are weeded) and for an early warning of a fish before I feel the take through my seat. As I'm fishing in 6-15ft of water usually, I trail

the lures a good 50 yards behind me and opt for hard shallow runners in the 11-14cm range. I use Fladen and Rapala lures in a range of colours.

For casting lures it is usually over a shallow wreck so I take a rod of the same type but fitted with a spinning reel and a leader of 20lb flourocarbon. The lures are wedges around two inches long or a Toby around three inches in length, depending on the strength of the flow around the structure. These will work fine on top or down deep but have a tendency to snag.

I do drift fish occasionally in clear water. If it's somewhere where I'm bouncing pirks or jellies and I expect cod, I'll use the same gear as for downtiding. Otherwise I use my lure rods with feathers (pictured below), hokkais or sabikis (with or without bait). In both cases I deploy a drogue from my anchor trolley to slow my drift.



THE ROAD TO SUCCESS PART 13

Words by John Holden

SHOCK HORROR!

Casting without a leader may appear reckless, but it can be done in the right circumstances

Fishing without attaching a shockleader is not a crime against humanity. What started as common sense guidance has morphed into an all-encompassing law imposed by certain zealots.

For the record I sometimes use a shockleader, sometimes not. I sometimes stick to the old formula of 10lb of breaking strain for each ounce of sinker weight, but sometimes not.

I always use a 50lb shockleader when I'm casting a long way with 150 grams or more of lead weight. I know from experience that 50lb test is far stronger than I actually need. The extra poundage is handy insurance against cuts and abrasion from the seabed and compensates for the inevitable dodgy knot. My preference is for ordinary monofil with a bit of stretch, and I use the same material for rig bodies. Why, then, do so many people insist on much stronger leaders for beach work, never mind field casting?

Essentially it is all about shock. The combination of a fast, stiff rod and a fairly short but brutal power

stroke can impose a massive jolt to the leader. Less than about 80lb line may be unsafe. With a different rod and style, especially one that builds power comparatively slowly over a wide arc, another caster may hit the same distances in perfect safety with less than 50lb leader.

I can cast 150g or even 170g on 35lb leader, confident that I won't crack off. The reason why goes back to my tournament days when we had the four ounce level-line event — no shock leader allowed. As the old records show, it is practical to cast four ounces over 200 yards using 18lb line right through to the sinker.

ALL ABOUT PRESSURE

Plenty of practice and the right set-up aside, there is no secret. It is how the leader pressure builds up that makes the difference. Suppose you want to push a car. One way would be take a mighty run-up and slam into the back of it. It's a great recipe for pain and failure. The other way is to put your shoulder to the bodywork and push steadily, get the wheels turning and then increase the power. The same principles apply to casting.



Safety advice is to use a shockleader



Leader breaking strain can be reduced

I'm not saying that modern ideas are wrong. Anyone blasting into the cast is duty bound on safety grounds to use a suitable shockleader. But I would point out that the rules that bind modern tackle and techniques do not apply across the board. It is safe to reduce the breaking strain in many circumstances, or even to dispense with a leader altogether.

Having said that, I use some form of leader nearly all the time, usually more for the fishing than casting. For lure work, bass fishing and the lighter end of general beach work with 125g of lead or below, a 20-30lb leader (depending on casting load and mainline strength) is a handy guard against line and knot damage, and it provides more dragging power over the last few yards for coping with weed and hooked fish. ■



Follow all the latest news, catches,
photos from Century on

www.facebook.com/Century.Sea.Fishing



OUR DESIGNERS HAVE NOW GONE FURTHER, SO THAT YOU CAN TOO.

Our SURF editions are designed for it; casting further with ease. Thanks to precision line lay from Slow Cross Wrap, each cast will seamlessly fly at speed, aided too by the 'LC' spool design. The twin lip of 'LC' spools provides the minimum of resistance and control on the line release to keep the line travel narrow and even. The result is reduced backlash and smoother line travel through the guides; delivering that improved distance you are seeking. The SCW Surf choice starts with the Crosscast in 35mm or 45mm options with the Emblem and unmistakable Basia in 45mm. Slow Cross Wrap + 'LC' Long Cast: getting you there.

SLOW **CROSS** **WRAP** + 'LC' Long Cast



19 Emblem SURF 45 SCW QD
RRP £175.00



20 Crosscast SURF 45 SCW QD
RRP £125.00



20 Crosscast SURF 35 SCW QD
RRP £99.99





20 Basia SURF 45 SCW QD
RRP £650

FIRST LOOK

Your update on the latest gear arriving in the tackle shops

SNUGPACK ARROWHEAD JACKET

RRP: £130



Based on its best-selling Sleeka Elite jacket, Snugpak has created a warm, breathable, windproof and lightweight jacket that provides excellent protection from the elements.

The combination of the water-repellent Paratex outer material and the exclusive Softie 100 per cent polyester insulation, gives it a comfort rating to 0°C.

The Arrowhead can be worn either as a cold-weather mid-layer or outer garment. Its brushed polyester-lined neck warmer and insulated, zip-off detachable hood adds valuable additional warmth and protection, while making it a versatile garment.

Other features include two deep handwarmer pockets, an internal zipped pocket, hook and loop adjustable cuffs and handy zip pockets located on the arm and chest. Weighing just 820g, it is supplied in a handy stuff sack with mesh bottom for easy compact carrying.

Available in Olive, Black and Multicam colour options and in unisex sizes Small to XXL.

■ For more information or to locate your nearest stockist, visit: www.snugpak.com

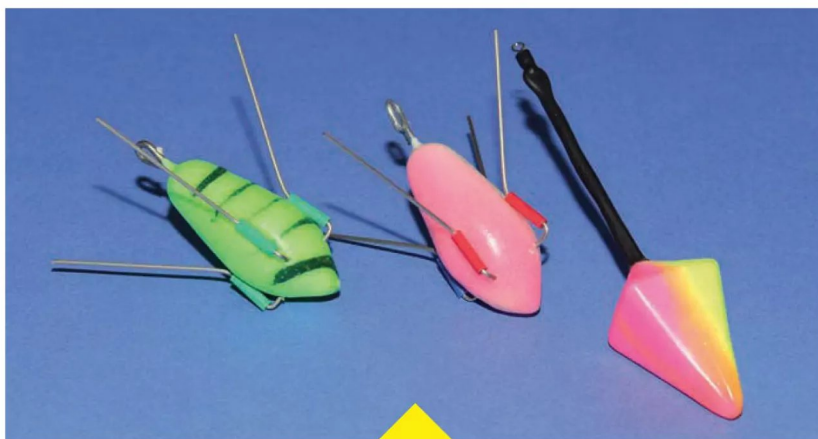
TURKANA SPARUS RIG JIG

RRP: £129.99

This special piece of fishing equipment has been invented and manufactured by Turkana. The Sparus rig jig, which is made with high-quality PVC and aluminium, features adjustable jigs that can extend up to over 2.4 metres or 3.05 metres, depending on the model. It also comes with tension springs.

It is perfectly designed to construct rigs, especially when gluing components into position. Adjustable U-bars are fitted to keep your length of snood gaps the same at all times and a total of 49 traces can be made simultaneously.

■ For more information, visit: www.turkanafishing.co.uk



C GLOW WEIGHTS

A new range of glow in the dark lead weights has recently been launched. Coated with a special resin, the sinkers glow brightly after a blast from your headlight or UV torch.

Variations include a double pyramid with sizes of 5oz costing £2.40 each and 6½oz at £2.50.

The SKM versions are available in 5oz, 6oz and 7oz in either plain at £3 each or breakout style at £3.50 each. Star pyramid weights will be available soon in 2oz, 3oz and 4oz with prices to be announced. All pyramid lead weights feature 140lb swivels.

■ To order, or for more info, check out the C Weights Facebook page. Alternatively search them on Instagram at: [cweightsglowgrippers](#).

RATING SYSTEM

Our testers and reviewers use their experience to evaluate the quality and functionality of tackle to provide independent, credible and authoritative advice for our readers. On some pages, you may see the following endorsements

SeaAngler

RECOMMENDED

Tackle which our testers or reviewers recommend to our audience.

SeaAngler

BEST BUY

Tackle we believe is the best when tested or reviewed against direct competitor products.

SeaAngler

5 STAR

★★★★★

Some products reviewed will be awarded a star rating ranging from 0-5.



BISCAY DEEP MINNOW LURE

FROM: £6.98 PER PACK

The Storm 360 GT Coastal Biscay Minnow is designed for long casting from either boat or shore and is now available in smaller sizes.

The fixed jighead has a tapered design, which helps to cut through the wind, while the slim body also reduces drag. Once in the water the lure's profile is similar to a wide range of baitfish and its paddletail gives a realistic action with incredible vibration, even at low speeds.

It works well with a steady retrieve and the swim depth can be varied by how long you let it sink, the rod angle

and speed of retrieve. This allows you to fish anywhere from just below the surface to bumping across the seabed.

The tail works even on the drop, so in deeper water pausing or dropping the rod tip can induce a take, either as the lure is falling or when you restart your retrieve. An additional chin eyelet gives the option of adding an assist hook or blade.

You have the choice of two fully rigged lures per pack, or a rigged lure with a spare body.

■ For more information or to locate a stockist, visit: www.rapala.co.uk



LITTLE PIGASUS PRINTED MUG

PRICE: £10

What a neat idea for any angling club or charter skipper. These fishing mugs are printed to order with a picture and wording of your choice. Each mug is professionally produced using quality graphics, and the colours will not fade. All mugs are dishwasher and microwave safe too. They are posted to you in a protective polystyrene box.

■ For more information or to place an order, visit: www.little-pigasus.co.uk

AKIOS NANO-TECH SPORT BOAT RODS

RRP: £69.99



A new range of sport action boat rods, with ratings of 6-10lb, 12-15lb and the heavier-actioned 15-20lb and all offering ultimate sensitivity, has been launched by Akios. The PBS system in the nano carbon blank allows balance and feel,

together with progressive power into the butt area of the rod.

All the models are fitted with Seaguide rings and reel seats.

■ For more information visit: www.akiosfishingtackle.com



MAG-nificent!

Could this latest offering signal a resurgence for multipliers reels?

PENN 525 MAG4
RRP: £160



THE MULTIPLIER REEL MARKET HAS BEEN mostly dormant for a few years, and it would certainly seem that the movers and shakers in this industry have run out of ideas. However, the boffins at Penn have been busy scribbling down designs of a reel that will surely raise an eyebrow among many sea anglers.

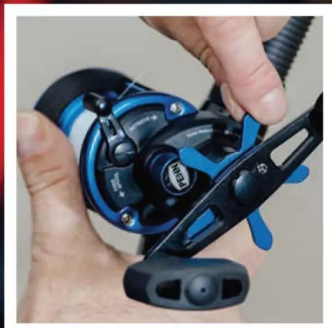
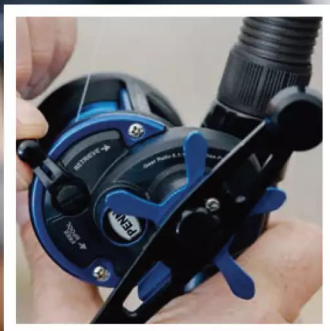
Over the years, trends have swayed somewhat. While a majority of shore anglers have drifted to 'Team Fixed-Spool', the lovers of the multiplier (me included) finally have something to get excited about.

Those long hours spent at the design stage have definitely been worth it for Penn because, at last, this is a multiplier to lust over. It's a reel that offers strength, smoothness, control and, ultimately, the performance to match. Here it is...the new Penn 525 Mag4.

GOOD LOOKS

I get no pleasure in taking reels apart; in fact I'm useless at it. When I purchase a new reel, the only thing on my mind is filling it with line and then going fishing.

The first thing that struck me about Penn's new baby, the latest in the 525 family tree, was its unbelievably good looks. Blazoned in a blue





trim that I couldn't take my eyes off and being shrouded in a matt black frame really does set off this multiplier. The neat gearbox doesn't make it overweighted on one side either; Penn really has got the balance spot on. As you'd expect, the power handle is strong enough to pile on the pressure while the hardened rubber grip is ergonomically sublime.

The gear lever takes a decent firm push to click the reel into free-spool, so there is absolutely no chance of knocking it back into gear mid-cast. Another thing worth mentioning about this

lever is the fact that Penn has slightly raised it to sit above the frame. I like this alteration simply because it helps to prevent sand becoming clogged underneath.

It's also fitted with a line clicker too. Some anglers ignore this feature but it's something that I approve of and switch on when threading the mainline through the rings before starting a session. It's an ideal alarm when targeting larger species that tend to run when grabbing the bait.

Penn has changed how the magnetic control is adjusted. Now there is an extended knob that allows the magnets to be increased or decreased by clicks. With absolutely no chance of altering the setting during casting, it's a huge smiley face and thumbs up from me. The clutch wheel is easily adjusted too, and again there is a good firm click when doing this.

PERFORMANCE

After loading the aluminium spool with 18lb mono and finishing off with a 15-70lb tapered shockleader, it was time to take the Mag4 for a spin. Setting the magnets to fully applied, my intention was to gradually free them with each cast. The first cast was smooth, but it was very noticeable that the six-ounce sinker was being held back. Yes, those magnets really keep things in check.

As I loosened the magnets a click at a time, my next few casts went well. This was the point where things started to become interesting, because the model I had was a bit of a racing machine. The spool free-floats on a live spindle and, as I loosened the magnets further, my distances dramatically increased too, until it came to the point where I had to thumb the spool hard as the mainline rapidly started lifting. Run this reel with no mag control at all and, believe me, you'll be in a spot of bother if your thumb timing is off. It really does fly away and at high speed.

Find a preferred setting that suits you and then look forward to having so much fun. Each cast was a joy with no horrible grinding noises when winding in; that'll be the stainless-steel gears and pinion which are so much better than bronze versions.

The Penn 525 Mag4 is a winner. Shore anglers who target cod, rays, smoothhounds, bull huss, conger eels and tope will definitely reap the benefits of this reel. There is a smaller 515 Mag4 model for those who like to target bass or species that don't quite need the grunt that the 525 offers.

I reckon the many anglers who used to prefer a multiplier before switching to 'Team Fixed-Spool' could be in for a day of reckoning. This beauty may be enough to drag you back. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

- **Frame:** Lightweight graphite
- **Spool:** Aluminium
- **Bearings:** 6+1
- **Gears/pinion:** Stainless steel
- **Weight:** 439g
- **Retrieve:** 6.1:1
- **Drag:** HT-100
- **Line capacity:** 280yd/0.35mm mono
- **Braking:** Extended magnetic adjustment knob
- **RRP:** £160

For more info or to locate your nearest stockist, visit:
www.penn-fishing.co.uk



Mono: 15lb/280yds • 17lb/245yds • 20lb/185yds
38mm/255m • 41mm/225m • 46mm/170m
Braid: 20lb/510yds • 30lb/385yds • 50lb/270yds

THE KIT YOU NEED FOR...

ROUGH GROUND

Casting a baited rig into rough ground brings with it so many challenges. Dealing with tackle-hungry snags and thick weed can be demanding not only on you, but also the kit you use in such harsh territory. By using the correct gear, though, the rewards can be spectacular and bring with them a huge sense of achievement.

ROD AND REEL



First and foremost, you will need a rod and reel that can withstand a substantial amount of punishment. They must be able to deal with the rigours of pulling hard and exerting plenty of pressure.

For multiplier users, the Century Eliminator T1000 rod is right up there and capable of dealing with the rigours of rough ground fishing. Equally, the Anyfish Anywhere GB FS Pro MK2 (see page 82) is perfect for fixed-spool users.

Reels should possess a spool big enough for holding a decent amount of thick mono, such as 28lb breaking strain, along with a shockleader or rubbing leader. The Penn 525 Mag4 multiplier (see page 74) is incredibly strong and offers enough grunt to drag a fish through the snags.

The Icon Surf 70FD fixed-spool reel is one of the toughest on the market and has a deep spool capable of storing more than enough mainline.

■ ANYFISH ANYWHERE GB FS PRO MK2: RRP: £525

■ ICON SURF 70FD FIXED-SPOOL REEL: RRP: £85

Fishing into snaggy ground can be challenging and your tackle needs to be up to the job...here we show you the correct gear that will bring you more success

FOOTWEAR

Chest waders are ideal, especially if you intend rock hopping and wading through gullies during a retreating tide. The best to use will have studded soles that will give you an extremely solid grip while walking over weed-covered rocks. Versions like the Vass 600 Series chest wader with studded soles are perfect.

■ VASS 600 SERIES CHEST WADERS: RRP: £72.99





RIGS

For snaggy ground, rigs should be simple. Always try to avoid using lots of added components because this only increases the risk of losing tackle to snags. A single-hook flapper rig tied with the loop-to-loop method is by far the best.

Depending on what species you're targeting, use a single size 4/0 hook designed to carry a large cocktail bait. Avoid using

a Pennell rig, simply because the extra hook is prone to becoming snagged, even with a hooked fish.

By adding a rotten-bottom system, like the Gemini Genie Breaker version, you can dramatically reduce tackle losses while still giving yourself a decent chance of landing a hooked fish.

■ GEMINI GENIE BREAKERS: RRP: £2.50 PER PACK



BAIT

Use baits that are found in the habitat of rough ground such as crabs and mussels. While these will be available to resident species, never rule out fish baits such as squid, Bluey, mackerel and razorfish for adding more pungent scent. Sometimes using them all together as a cocktail is better. Nowadays, cart seems to be extremely productive for catching fish in rough ground (see page 60).



BUCKET

Having a bucket is great because you can stuff it with bait and other tackle items, such as lead weights, scissors and elastic thread, and it can also be hung from the tripod so everything is close at hand. It also provides a bit of weight to keep the tripod stable too.

The Tronixpro bucket tray and lid is certainly the best on the market at the moment. With a capacity of 27 litres, it has a separate tray inside for storing extra bait, tackle and accessories.

■ TRONIXPRO BUCKET, TRAY AND LID: RRP: £24.99



SHOCKLEADER

Rubbing leaders and shockleaders will suffer damage during a session and should be checked regularly for abrasion and tiny nicks. Never be afraid to replace a leader several times during a session as this will certainly be necessary to prevent losing fish in rough ground while maintaining safety during casting.

Try the Fisheagle Tourney Shockleader, which is strong and reasonably priced too.

■ FISHEAGLE TOURNEY RED SHOCKLEADER: RRP: £3.99



LEAD WEIGHTS

You will need plenty of sinkers and you should be prepared to lose a few to the snags. Some anglers prefer to make their own to keep a healthy stash when fishing into rough ground. Try

to avoid using shop-bought versions as this will undoubtedly prove to be costly over a season.

Breakout versions are less likely to fall into cracks, holes or crevices, although some anglers like fixed-grip weights with flexible wire.



TRIPOD

Using a tripod allows you to quickly move with the tide over rough ground and helps while you're preparing a spare baited trace. The Icon Tripod is an ideal rod stand, with or without the additional suspended tray, and is incredibly stable even in a strong gale. The double head is coated to prevent your rods from being scratched and the double-cup section allows you to adjust the height that you prefer them to sit in the tide.

■ ICON TRIPOD: RRP: £34.99





CHOOSING THE RIGHT LURE ROD

Don't make daft mistakes, instead follow the advice of South Devon bass guide Marc Cowling



AS A PROFESSIONAL BASS GUIDE, I AM fortunate to be in a position where I can borrow one of my client's rods for a try during or after most sessions. As a result, I have used the shortest, longest, flimsiest, cheapest, nastiest and probably least suitable choices, including those awkward and nearly obsolete 'spinning rods', through to the most expensive, exclusive and seemingly best lure rods out there.

If you're new to this type of fishing or looking to upgrade, where you should you start? It's a divisive subject, hence why I won't be listing specific rods. There are two schools of thought when choosing – firstly the type of ground and secondly the attributes of a particular rod.

The first point is simple enough. If the topography of your coastline involves using potentially heavy metal lures (25-35g+) from shallow sandy beaches, or larger, denser surface and sub-surface lures, either from rocky outcrops or steeply shelving beaches into primarily deep water, then a longer (certainly 9ft+) and more



The handle
needs to be
comfortable

powerful rod is required. But, if you envisage chasing bass at remote coves and inlets, over expanses of reef covered by shallow water (under 15ft) or within the confines of tidal lagoons and estuaries, then consider a rod shorter than 9ft.

ROD DESIGN

The second aspect is fundamental to your chances of achieving consistent success. Many occasional anglers catch their first bass on a metal 'spinner' lobbed out and simply retrieved, but to catch decent-sized bass on a recurring basis, the ability to work the lure in the manner that it was designed for is crucial.

The concept of lure fishing is to imitate a swimming, crawling, dying, struggling or overwhelmed creature or prey item by making a piece of wood or plastic look like the real thing so that a predator will try to eat it. To achieve this, look for a designated lure rod with attributes such as crispness, feel, precision, lightness in your hand and manoeuvrability. These must sit alongside enough power to bully a fish if required, without the rod feeling unwieldy or cumbersome.

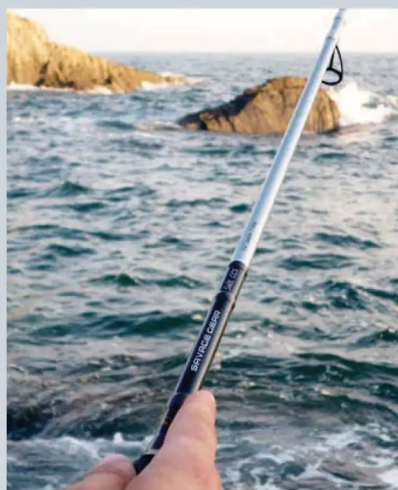
The fundamental attributes to consider when searching for a bass lure rod are balance, casting weight range, action and sensitivity. I'll deal with each of these in turn.

BALANCE

The balance of a lure rod (without a reel attached initially) is more significant than how much it weighs, although one in the 120-140g bracket would be in the right ball park. Assessing how this may translate to fishing with it is easy enough. First, balance the rod with your chosen reel attached on your middle finger. The further up the blank towards the tip you need to place your finger, the more tip heavy it is – and the more tip heavy, the more tiresome it will feel when working your lures. I consider the ideal balance point would see the rod (with reel attached) balancing very close to where the rod grip meets the blank.



The ideal balance point



Ground type can determine your choice

Something I get asked a lot is whether a heavier reel can make a rod feel more balanced. My opinion is that a weight (for example a £1 coin at 9g or a £2 coin at 12g) taped to the very end of the rod butt (especially when it weighs around 130g and the reel around 180-230g) makes more difference (for the better if a rod is tip heavy) than attaching a reel that is 50g or even 100g heavier for that matter.

CASTING WEIGHT

First consider the weight of the individual lures you'll routinely use. The correct rod for you will compress enough to propel lighter lures seaward, yet have the capability to comfortably launch heavier lures into a stiff breeze without placing too much stress on the blank.

As an example, a rod rated at 10-30g, casting a lure between 19-21g would generate the most opportune levels of compression and therefore ease of use. ►



The casting weight range should be shown on the rod



ROD ACTION

A rod's action is determined by the material with which it is made (graphite, carbon fibre), the thickness of the walls of the blank, where it flexes (compresses) and how quickly the rod straightens again (recovers).

To keep things relatively simple, I've broken down a rod's action into three categories: soft/slow, medium/moderate, fast or very fast.

■ **Soft/slow:** The rod bends further down the blank (towards the reel). Advantages are that you're less likely to tear the hooks from a fish's mouth and the rod will compress easily (ideal for soft plastics and lighter lures). The main disadvantage is that lure vibration, bites and that all-important feel will be slightly lacking, and any movement created by the angler (twitches etc) will take a split second longer to transmit through the rod to your lure.

■ **Medium/moderate:** This type bends in the top half towards the tip and is stiffer towards the butt. Positives are more power, casting accuracy and increased sensitivity with small, medium and relatively large (70-140mm) lures of light to moderate weights (10-25g). A negative is the increased risk to tearing a hook-hold.

■ **Fast or very fast:** The rod flexes in the final quarter towards the tip. This type is very sensitive and able to cast and work a varied range of lures, sizes and weights. Sometimes a fast rod can feel a little too poker-like and the main disadvantage is the increased probability of the hooks pulling from a fish's mouth. Considering a decent sized bass can make powerful runs often parallel to your stance, means the probability of a lost fish is increased.



The writer, Marc Cowling's Major Craft Skyroad rod and a selection of hard lures



Quality materials make some rods a joy to use because they are so lightweight



Your chosen rod must be able to cast a lure and cope with a hard-fighting fish

SENSITIVITY

For all the wagging of a fishing rod on your visit to the local tackle shop, it is the way it feels when you are out fishing that is important. The overall sensation when you are not only retrieving, but also, crucially, working that lure is paramount. It's a sensation that is enhanced when a rod with the reel attached balances very close to where the blank converges with the rod grip.

To get the best out of the set-up and to increase your chances of catching, you want to know what is going on at the business end. Visualising the lure's action in the current or backwash, with every flick of the wrist, jerk or quicker turn of the reel's handle instantaneously connecting you to that fake fish simply epitomises lure fishing.



This Yamaga Blanks rod from Japan is expensive, but worth every penny

ALL-ROUNDER

If owning a couple (or more) bass lure rods to suit all occasions isn't your thing, and you're looking for that one all-rounder, then go for an 8ft 6in to 9ft version. It should be feather-light (under 140g), balance beautifully and be extremely light in the tip, alongside being able to effortlessly launch and work substantial lures (like the 26g, 140mm Xorus Patchinko II) at range. Further, it should be capable of whisking 8-14g weedless soft plastics deftly into the margins or tide runs, as well as smashing 15-24g hard-diving minnows out into a raging gale. All this while allowing you to feel everything and transmit, directly and simultaneously, your every rod and reel movement. These rods are out there, trust me. ■

REEL GOOD



How can Shimano squeeze so many features into a spinning reel?

SHIMANO VANFORD C3000HGF RRP: £194.99



HAVE WE got to the stage with modern spinning reels where our hard-earned money is buying us more quality and features than we could have ever imagined?

I think back to only 10 years ago and then I take a close look at this stunning new Shimano Vanford and, for under just under £200, I cannot believe how much lure fishing goodness has managed been crammed into this ridiculously lightweight reel.

Weighing a miserly 191g when loaded with braid, the Vanford C3000HGF is so smooth when you turn the handle that I have to wonder how much better a more expensive spinning reel could be. By the way, the letters HG mean high gear. I favour a 3000 size Shimano spinning reel on lure rods around the 8-9ft length, and also on some of the lighter and more responsive 9ft 6in models, but, in fact, this reel is so light that I'd be more inclined towards the 4000 version for a 9ft 6in rod.

SUBLIME

I look after my lure fishing gear, but even after fishing a fair bit with this reel it is running as smoothly as when I first lifted it out of its box and turned the handle. After fishing, I wind the drag down tight on a

spinning reel, hose it down with freshwater, then I slacken the drag and allow it to drip-dry. I keep a close watch on the various bearings I can get to easily and re-oil or re-grease when required. Even then this thing is sublime to use.

I have loaded it with braid and there hasn't been even the merest hint of a wind-knot from my very first cast with the reel. Shimano claims a bit of an increase in casting distance with their adoption of these long-stroke spools, but I can't pretend I have noticed anything different with how my lures are getting out there. I like the look of these slightly longer spools by the way, and physics suggests there is probably a tiny bit of an increase in distance, but in the real fishing world I can't notice it.

I like a spinning reel to just feel right when I am manually snapping the bail-arm closed and starting to retrieve a lure, and I am happy to report that everything about this new Vanford feels right to me. Time will tell how much of a saltwater battering it can endure, but if I look after it and don't go drowning it then I think we are talking about a rather special spinning reel here.

How on earth can Shimano possibly put more features into a spinning reel for this amount of money? It's a winner for me. ■



A bass caught by an angler using the Vanford



SPECIFICATIONS

SHIMANO VANFORD C3000HGF

- Bearings: 7+1
- Weight: 180g
- Capacity: 210m/0.25mm
- Retrieve: 6:1
- Drag: 9kg maximum
- RRP: £194.99

* Available from Shimano stockists.

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The Vanford is light and classy



THERE'S ROOM FOR MORE

This second generation of Anyfish Anywhere rods will be hard to resist for competent casters

**AFAW GB FS PRO MARK 2 and
TOURNAMENT MATCH PRO MK2**
RRP: £525





AS I STOOD STARING AT MY ROD RACK, admiring my beach rods secured in position against the wall, and realising they had remained idle for over a year due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, I still felt a real sense of satisfaction.

I don't possess a huge collection of shore rods, but those I do own have certainly served me well over many years. Everything I need is right there at my fingertips and there is absolutely no need to replenish the stock by adding more.

As I gazed on the line of carbon blanks, I lifted out one of my Anyfish Anywhere blanks – an original Tournament Match Pro. Next to it is the GB FS Pro model, which I lifted out too. Assembling the pair, I give each one a wobble, as you do. After five minutes I slot them carefully back into the safety of the rack, happy that my armoury is complete.

There's categorically no need for anymore, right? You may think not, but after receiving a phone call from my mate Julian Shambrook, the Anyfish Anywhere boss, I found myself having a rethink. After the pleasantries, I say that with my tongue planted firmly in my cheek because generally, Julian kicks off any conversations we have by spending the following few minutes imitating my North East accent. To be fair to him, he is rather good at it. He then falls silent and there's a pause

before he reveals he has some good news.

I knew immediately where this was heading, while simultaneously wondering if I had more vacancies on my rod rack. In short, he informed me there were to be two new additions to his Red range of Anyfish Anywhere blanks. These are the second generation of Tournament Match Pro and GB FS Pro two-piece rods. Thanks Julian, now I definitely need to secure two more spaces to the rack. Just when I reckoned I had everything I required in rod weaponry, two suddenly come along and change that perception. I was rather excited. I mean who wouldn't be? Like I said, it was bound to happen.

MATCH PRO

Soon the two rods were heading their way from Devon to me. They arrived the following day and, as with any rod delivery, I was apprehensive as I opened the tubes. The potential hazards to rods in transit always send a shiver down my spine.

Thankfully, there were no broken rings or cracked tip sections. Itching to get on the beach and have a few casts, I jumped in the car and headed out. ►



You get top-quality Fuji rings and reel seats

The first change I noticed was the Fuji Alconite BMNAG guides are gone and have now been replaced with BCMNAG versions. Each rod is equipped with a Fuji sliding reel seat too, which is ideal for strapping my reel into my favoured and more importantly, exact position.

Both rods come supplied with a carbon reducer. I'm not keen on reducers and rarely use them, but now I had an option to extend the length of each blank if I wished.

First up was the Tournament Match Pro MK2, which is designed to be used with a multiplier reel. At 13ft 11in, it's not the lightest shore rod I've ever held, but, whether you decide to strap your reel high or low on the butt section, the balance is superb. The rating is stated at 150-200g, so with this in mind (and my back not what it used to be) I opted to clip on a 175g lead weight.

Going straight in with a full-blooded pendulum swing, it's noticeable that this rod is lightning quick. As far as I'm concerned, and I say this with an air of caution to you, there is absolutely no room for mistiming a hard and powerful cast. Get your timings wrong and the rod will definitely not forgive you. If you're an angler who isn't super-efficient in casting, I'd almost certainly recommend against buying this blank; it's not for you. However, if you're on the ball and a serious shore angler looking to upgrade, you will simply fall in love with it.

The power in the butt section is without doubt generated through sheer speed. As you move into the power stroke, the middle of the blank immediately takes control, and this is the critical moment during the cast with the Tournament Match Pro MK2; the point of no return if you prefer. The tip speed is immense and when the timing all comes together perfectly the rod's performance is totally exquisite.

It's not a poker by any stretch of the imagination nor designed to be used in rough ground. It is, though, a powerful outfit. Although it shines supremely when performing powerful pendulum casts, it adores off-the-ground styles too. Put as much as you like into it; in fact, put everything you've got into – it will take it all and some. I can't stress enough, though, that the rod's speed and reaction certainly will take your breath away.

FS PRO

The GB FS Pro MK2 is a different beast. At 14ft and designed to be used with a fixed-spool reel, you need to be aware that it is not a Continental rod. Lovers of fixed-spool reels loaded with braid really will get the best out of this rod.

For one reason or another, the past few years have seen many shore anglers attaching fixed-spool reels to shore rods that are designed to be used with a multiplier. Whether it's a fashion thing, I'm not totally sure but I've witnessed so many anglers going into a powerful cast and suffering wring-wrap and cracking off. The coils of braid leaving the spool at high speed are so large, that the first guide simply can't accommodate them, resulting in the braid – or mono – wrapping around it. Even worse if the mainline somehow luckily makes it through, it could (or should I say will) eventually wrap around the tip. If you've never witnessed a tip breaking because of this, it's

Both rods offer plenty of power



The FS Pro is for fixed-spool reels, the Match Pro (above) for multipliers



certainly an expensive catastrophe you never want to happen. Do yourself a huge favour and use a rod designed to be used with a fixed-spool reel.

This is where the GB FS Pro MK2 shows off its dominance in style but, oh my word, it has to be one of the most powerful rods I've ever had the pleasure of casting; it's absolutely brutal.

Do not make the same schoolboy error I did and forget your casting glove or fingerstall. Be warned, you will definitely need it. I simply couldn't bend it without my glove, but the distance I was hitting was noticeably long.

I think the benefit of this rod for me would be the fact of coping with decent fish in extremely harsh territory. In fact, it's definitely coming with me on my next visit to Norway or a trip to the Highlands in search of common skate in the deep-water lochs; it's absolutely perfect for that. Anglers fishing from high cliffs will relish this rod too.

It has the same rating as the Match Pro MK2. Timing is again vitally important and crucial to keep up with the fast tip speed. Take a look at the online video of the UK's number one tournament caster Owan Moyle hitting it with full force. It's frightening to see exactly what this rod is capable of doing.

I know that anglers using fixed-spool reels loaded with either braid or mono, and fishing from high cliffs or extremely rough marks where distance is needed, along with plenty of grunt to bring a fish back, will adore it. This rod is certainly right up their street.

However, I can't stress highly enough, if you are by any means a mediocre caster or just entering into the sport, this rod is not for you. Avoid it and choose another shore rod, or better still, give Julian a call and he can explain which AFAW blank will suit you. He's been in this game a long time and knows what he's talking about.

No prizes for guessing, but both these newcomers are now sitting alongside my other shore rods in the rack (yes, I made the space) and I can't wait to get out targeting the marks and species for which I know these rods are designed. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

AFAW Tournament Match Pro MK2

- SECTIONS: Two
- LENGTH: 13ft 11in
- RATING: 150-200g
- GUIDES: Fuji Alconite BCMNAG
- REEL SEAT: Fuji sliding
- BAG: Yes
- RRP: £525

GB FS Pro MK2

- SECTIONS: Two
- LENGTH: 14ft
- RATING: 150-200g
- GUIDES: Fuji Alconite BCMNAG
- REEL SEAT: Fuji sliding
- BAG: Yes
- RRP: £525

For more info or to locate your nearest stockist, tel: 01803 213555 or visit: www.anyfishanywhere.com



OBJECT OF DESIRE

Drool over this glorious reel from the Daiwa stable. Featuring all the bells and whistles with top performance to match, it will be a classic

**DAIWA BASIA SURF
TOURNAMENT 45 SCW QD**
RRP: £650

SeaAngler
RECOMMENDED

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, AN ITEM OF tackle comes along that will play on your mind and thoughts of it wake you in the middle of the night. It doesn't happen often but when it does, it can be cruel.

This torment started at the end of last summer. Forget all about pandemic restrictions, social distancing and face masks because we had become accustomed to that. On this occasion, my eyes saw something that I couldn't shake out of my memory. A worrying seed of temptation had been planted.

Who was to blame? Daiwa, that's who, for bringing to my attention its Basia Surf Tournament fixed-spool reel. That fleeting glance left me knowing I had to have it, even though it wasn't in the shops until January. At £650 though, it's a case of biting the bullet or forgetting it.

In the end, it was finally in my hands. The shiny, lightweight thing of beauty was mine. It was a moment to cherish I can tell you. That's the thing with some fixed-spool reels, they can be gorgeous to behold. Such an item wouldn't look out of place on the mantelpiece – something to gaze upon with satisfaction.

INCREDIBLE

Back on planet Earth, my thoughts turned to getting this gleaming siren of a reel spooled up and down to the beach for a run out. After adding a lightened load of mono backing to the deep spool (a shallow spool comes with it

SPECIFICATIONS

**Daiwa Basia Surf Tournament
45 SCW QD**

- Ratio: 4.1:1
- Retrieve: 88cm per turn
- Bearings: Seven CRBB + two BB
- Body: Zaion
- Spool: Two, aluminium
- Capacity: 300m/0.35mm
- Weight: 485g/17.1oz
- Features: Magsealed, Slow Cross Wrap, Quick drag
- RRP: £650

For more info or to locate your nearest
Daiwa stockist, visit:
www.daiwasports.co.uk



SATISFYING

Flicking the bale-arm over prior to casting is extremely satisfying. It clicks purposefully, reassuring you that it will not inadvertently slip back during a cast.

I was now ready to make the first cast. My six-ounce lead weight lay on the shingle behind me, waiting to be smacked high into the sky, so I did just that. The tapered shockleader disappeared in a flash with the coloured braid quickly following in its wake. The reel was silent, only the slight 'trill' sound of the braid as it emptied from the spool was audible. It was so smooth, I had to double-check that it was still attached, and I guess this

too), I filled it with Daiwa's 0.20mm J-Braid; that's 35lb in old money. Having attached a 15-70lb monofilament tapered shockleader, it was time to find out exactly why it had turned my head.

Aesthetically, it's incredible, and almost emulates a freshly polished sports car. Any of you who have previous experience of a Basia will appreciate just how lightweight it is at just 485 grams (17.1oz). The whole body and rotor is corrosion-proof Zaion, which is a high-density carbon with anti-corrosion properties. Said to be as tough as metal but as light as carbon, a Zaion body is 25 per cent lighter than an equivalent in magnesium and 50 per cent lighter than aluminium.

Along with seven CRBB bearings, which are shielded to keep out sand and salt, and two ball bearings, it is also Magsealed. The latter blocks water and prevents degradation and loss of performance caused by saltwater and dust that may enter the mechanism. This reel is definitely up to the harsh environment of shore fishing.

It's equipped with a QD front-drag system, which basically means that, with just the slightest of adjustments, it can be manipulated instantly. That's handy if you're about to beach a fast-moving smoothhound and it then decides to turn around and bomb off into deeper water.

smoothness is all down to the SCW (Slow Cross Wrap), that optimises the line-lay on the spool with sheer perfection. When you add in the twin-edged spool lip, you can rest easy in the knowledge that line friction is all but eliminated.

Winding in is something you really need to experience for yourself because it's simply divine. It has a steady crank of 4.1:1 (88cm per turn of the handle) but the oscillation of the spool is so slow that I reckon it will be nearly impossible to mess up the line-lay. The coils of braid recovered on the spool simply nestled in perfectly with no overlapping at all, ensuring the next cast would be just as drama-free as the previous.

KEEPER

So, I bet you're all wondering what I think of the Daiwa Basia Surf Tournament 45 SCW QD – to give its full title? Let's just say it's a keeper, a reel I'm proud to own and use. Those cold sweats in the middle of the night were so worth it.

I won't attempt to winch a cod up the cliffs with it or drag a bull huss through rough ground; it's not for that. I'll keep it for the beach, where I need extra distance and can rely on its ultra-smoothness.

Of course, all this glamour, top specifications and performance come at a price. At £650 it's not cheap. Just be aware, however, when you do eventually see it in the flesh, be prepared for some sleepless nights until it's finally in your tacklebox... or on the mantelpiece. ■



Instant adjustment with the QD system



Magsealed to keep out water and dust

Words by John Holden

SALVAGE HUNTERS

THE RESTORERS

Messing around with old tackle may grow into a lifetime's enjoyment, but don't confuse it with saving cash which can end with the reel back on an auction site or, even worse, thrown in the bin

AMONG ANGLERS IN GENERAL there seems to be a growing thirst for playing around with old tackle, perhaps for the same reasons people enjoy restoring and driving classic cars. There was a time when I'd never go for a drive without a set of tools and a spare set of contact points in my car. Similarly, with old reels, keeping them running is all part of the game.

People own vintage reels for all kinds of reasons, ranging from serious collecting to just wanting something cheap to use. Whatever the case, you do have to get used to them and this can be a challenge. Old multipliers are more demanding than modern 6500CT-type reels but they're perfectly reliable and predictable once mastered. Quality vintage fixed spools are heavier, clumsier and less sophisticated than modern versions, but they cast and fish superbly well if the kinks are ironed out. For those who recall using these reels when they were brand new, there's an element of nostalgia too.

There's a big difference, though, between using vintage reels despite their age, and using them because of it. The first philosophy, mostly based on saving cash, is usually a short struggle ending with the reel back on eBay or in the bin. But if your reason for going vintage means a new challenge or a return to golden times remembered, messing around with old tackle may grow into a lifetime's enjoyment.

The best way into all this is to go for Penn and Mitchell multipliers. Fixed spool choice is wider – Mitchell, DAM, Penn or an early Daiwa, Shimano or the Sagarra Tarzan if you come across one. They are all simple, well made and easily maintained. Parts are usually no problem. The multipliers also cut right to the chase where skill is concerned. On a modern tournament-grade rod powered by a mighty pendulum, a Penn Squidder or some such will most likely be a disaster. Matched to a more modest rod and a progressive, smooth pendulum or off-ground cast, it will be a delight. You may be amazed just how far the bait sails out.



SETTING UP OLD FIXED-SPOOL REELS

Vintage fixed spools, such as the Mitchell 486, DAM 5001 and Penn Spinfisher 750, are robust and reliable. They may have a few mechanical weaknesses such as broken anti-reverse springs, but these are easily fixed. The bottom line is that they're great fishing reels that cast brilliantly – the Mitchell 486 held many tournament records in its time.

They scrub up well, as do other brands of similar quality. Moderate surface corrosion isn't a problem. Take off the gearbox cover and replace the old grease. Car wheel bearing grease will do but marine gearbox grease is better. As a rule, it's better not to mess with the innards unless there is an obvious problem.



Poor line lay and unreliable bale-arms are common on reels of this generation. The Spinfisher usually packs too much line towards the front of the spool, producing a reverse cone fill pattern. Others heap up in the middle or back. A few, including the DAM 5001, can be adjusted to improve matters. For a DIY solution, take off about half the line then refill by hand or by driving the spool with an electric drill so that, in the Penn's case, line builds up at the back of the spool. In other words, opposite to what the reel itself does. This process is called spool profiling.



Leave room for the length of line necessary for fishing; about 175 metres is plenty. Then put the spool back on the reel and fill as normal. The reel's bale-arm will still bias line towards the front of the spool, but because it now has more space to fill the outcome will be a level load, or even a slight coning as on tournament reels. It's a trial and error process but well worth doing. The rewards are longer casts and less risk of tangles.



Vintage reels are notorious for flipping the bale-arm shut in the middle of a cast. Many may seem to have been butchered by their previous owner, but, in reality, they've been modified to reduce this defect. Removing the bale-arm wire was often enough, for then line would not be trapped even if the pick-up itself did shut.

Some Mitchells eliminate the issue by having manual pick-ups, either factory-fitted parts or custom units such as the Shingleton folding pick-up. If you don't like hacking your reels, try holding the bale-arm open with a rubber band – ugly but effective



The drag on some fixed spools will lock easily for casting. On Spinfishers designed for catching fast-running game species, the drag plates are engineered to operate over a wide pressure range and to resist overheating. The screw threads will strip before the spool locks. There are several ways around this, but a convenient fix is to install a clip that anchors the spool to the reel frame. As well as guaranteeing that the spool won't slip in mid-cast, the system also means that the drag setting can be left preset to the line's breaking strain.

SETTING UP OLD MULTIPLIER REELS

A good wash and a dab of oil may be enough to get these golden oldies up and running. Most people know how to set up modern 6500CT-type reels, and the old ones aren't much different, so I'm focusing on the Mitchell 602AP multiplier, the perfect introduction to fishing and casting with vintage gear.

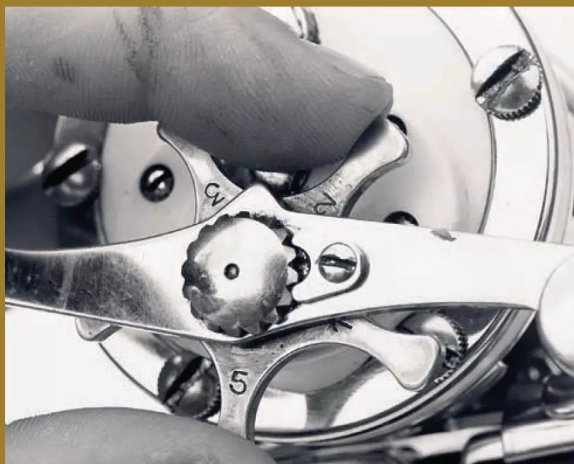
To anyone brought up on modern CT reels, letting an unbraked spool run free and untouched until the end of the cast might seem a daunting prospect. Combined with a good technique, confidence and a compatible rod, the spool really will take care of itself. These reels can be tuned for higher performance field work by using thinner oils and a higher line load. But for fishing, the basic set-up is more than good enough.



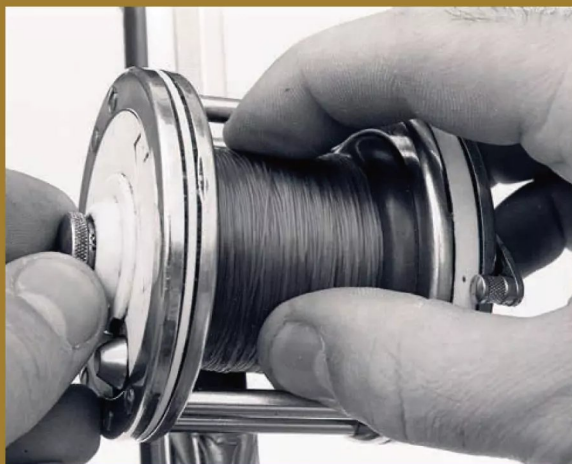
The metalwork of the 602AP and equivalent Penn reels is mostly chromed brass. Gears are brass or bronze. Plain spool bearings are usually phosphor bronze; stainless steel if they're ball races as on the Squidders. There is very little ferrous metal to rust, but chrome eventually peels and brass tarnishes. Sideplate screws are often seized from lack of use and being brass they are easy to snap. A spot of penetrating oil helps, as can a bit of heat. Should the worst happen, the solution is to tap the holes to take a slightly larger brass or stainless steel replacement screw.



Penn plastic spools stay in one piece as long as the mono line isn't wound on too tightly, in which case the flanges may shatter, or both halves may separate and expand off the spindle. Being graphite reinforced, Mitchell 602P spools are tougher but they still benefit from sensible handling. If the reel core is slotted, push the knot into the hole before winding on the line. This produces an even fill and smoother running. I prefer factory 'L' one-piece aluminium alloy spools on Penn reels. Newell custom spools are available but hard to find. Yes, reels can then be fitted with a magnetic brake.



There is a better than good chance that the reel has a frozen drag caused by salty muck having welded the steel drag washers to the friction plates. If not, then the drag may be badly worn and doesn't bite until the starwheel is cranked down hard. Either way, it's a straightforward fix. Steel can usually be polished clean. Friction plates sometimes work okay once degreased and lightly sanded, but they're better replaced. If genuine parts are unavailable, cut new ones — leather will do at a pinch. Penn HT100 friction washers are superb. Find the closest match for the old reel and customise for an exact fit.



Run line on under moderate tension. Load no higher than shown here, keeping the coils level in cotton-reel fashion. To start with, 0.40mm diameter mono line is a wise choice because it is less likely to backlash than 0.35mm or thinner. Some of these reels tend to trap line between spool flange and sideplates, so 0.40mm is good in this respect as well. Add a drop of fairly thick lube, such as SAE 90 gearbox oil, to both bearings. Set the left-hand cap to give a hint of spool side play. That's it. Try SAE 30 engine oil to speed things up in winter. Conversely, use thicker STP oil additive to slow the spool if SAE 90 is a touch too thin in hot weather.

Get a superb Icon M-Sport Elite Match rod for just £120

Take advantage of this incredible shore rod deal



This month's offer is for the brilliant Icon M-Sport Elite Match shore rod. This 13ft 10in, two-piece blank has been upgraded from the original model and features Fuji components as well as glass tips for enhanced sensitivity. The butt section has been reinforced to accommodate a reducer.

The Match (for fishing over clean ground) is one of three models in the M-Sport Elite range, the others being the Power (for fishing at distance over mixed ground) and the Ultra (for long range and rough ground). Our offer is for the Match version only.

Normally, the Elite Match would set you back £209.99 but could be yours today for just £120* – putting a cool £89.99 back into your pocket. It's a deal you cannot afford to miss.

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BOAT STORE

A guide to new products for anglers going afloat

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The polisher has a 127mm head with an 8mm orbit and a variable speed from 2,500-6,500rpm. This combination allows the user to achieve a high-gloss, professional finish with minimal effort.

Many polishers are too heavy and bulky for all-day use, and palm-sized polishers tend to cramp hands, but the Shurhold Polisher is

balanced and ergonomic. A soft-touch D-handle adjusts to the ideal work angle, reducing user strain. The straight grip has a non-slip rubber coating and ambidextrous power switch. An included side handle attaches quickly for more flexibility in work style choices.

The unit has a six-metre cord and its GFCI adapter adds safety when working around water by cutting power if submerged or a short occurs. With a quick-change Velcro backing plate, switching pads on the polisher is fast and easy. Shurhold offers a full range of interchangeable pads for scrubbing, compounding, polishing and waxing.

It comes supplied with a pad wrench, two spare carbon motor brushes, Allen wrench and canvas storage bag. Expect to pay around £210.



■ For more info, visit: www.shurhold.com

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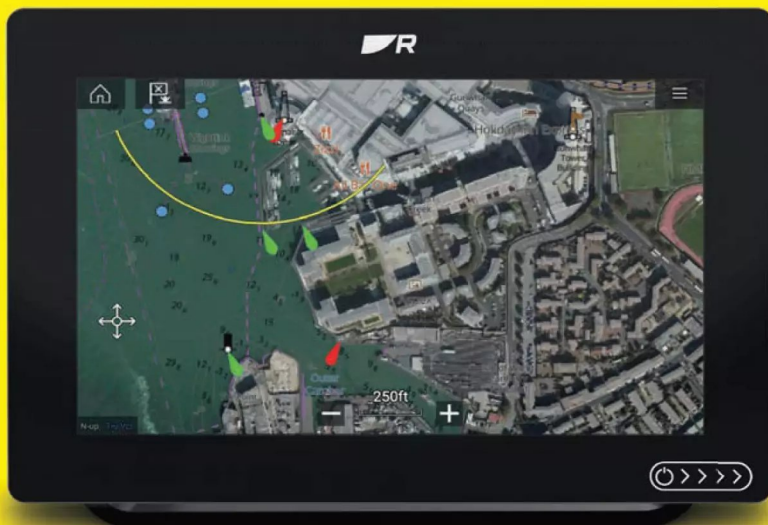
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ROY TAPPER

WITH A FISHING CAREER GOING back to the good old days of the 1970s and 80s, top shore match angler and keen specimen hunter Roy Tapper has seen many changes.

Here the former Wales shore team international talks about his favourite types of fishing, the changes in tackle and how anglers who fish the Bristol Channel have responded to the rise and fall of different fish species.

As a stalwart of the Welsh angling scene, he's seen many changes and reckons there is much to celebrate, even though some anglers still make fishing far too complicated

Q How old were you when you first started sea angling?

RT: I was seven or eight and my grandfather took me fishing at our local Rhymney River. We fished the freshwater part of the river and I caught a silver eel, which I can remember like it was yesterday. That was it, I was hooked and pestered him to take me as much as possible. Having no family car, we used to cycle to our local foreshore and dig bait before fishing from the seawall. We did this for many years.

Eventually I convinced him that we should join Rumney Sea Anglers, and we used to fish their matches every weekend. I started to travel to fish competitions further away. I have great memories of fishing with my grandfather, and I would not be such an enthusiastic angler had it not been for the wonderful years spent fishing with him every weekend.

Q Which species used to feature most frequently in those early catches?

RT: In the summer we caught large numbers of silver eels at Rumney Foreshore and Peterstone. Eels over 2lb were common. In the winter it was whiting and codling from Cardiff Foreshore, where the fishing used to be outstanding and included numerous double-figure cod. I remember one angler catching cod weighing 26lb and 28lb in the same week.

Q How do those same marks compare now, and which species do you catch?

RT: We suffered the decline in the eel population as the rest of the UK, so the summer fishing at Rumney has changed. We still catch some silver eels, albeit much smaller, and flounders, but we now get more conger eels and thornback rays which we never used to see there. We still catch codling at Cardiff Foreshore, but a four-pounder is a decent fish with only the occasional double caught each year.

The whiting fishing in the winter is terrible compared to when I started fishing. We would have matches where regularly 40 or more whiting, all over 28cm, would win, whereas now you are lucky to catch one sizeable whiting.

We now catch a lot more conger eels at Cardiff and it is very good for thornbacks, including several good double-figure fish every year. We are seeing smoothhounds too, again with good double-figure fish caught each year. Bass catches have increased too, especially last year, and I was lucky enough to get one of 12lb 12oz in May.

Q What have been the biggest changes in the Bristol Channel's fishing?

RT: The main change is water clarity. The working sewers were moved further out to sea and, when this happened, the local ragworm and lugworm beds began to disappear, and the fishing changed. Smoothhounds and the larger species of ray are more abundant and are caught further up the channel.

This continues each year with blonde rays at Cardiff Foreshore now. The smaller species declined, and it is unusual to catch a pouting or a poor cod from the shore, whereas they were deemed nuisance fish.



Ray species are now abundant in the Bristol Channel

Q Is modern fishing tackle more efficient compared the gear that was available?

RT: Rods are much lighter and more powerful, and reels ensure the maximum amount of line leaves the spool in a controlled manner during the cast. The modern rod and reel combination means anglers cast baits further, which is often needed in South Wales now, especially in daylight. Rig-making components have reduced in size but are stronger, although many people do over-complicate rigs.

Q If you could go back in time and fish with modern tackle, do you think it would have any impact on your catches?

RT: There were plenty of fish on the South Wales coastline for the first couple of decades of my fishing, and these would be caught on a simple one or two-hook rig cast 50 to 60 yards. As the fishing declined anglers who could cast further still caught good bags of fish, whereas those who didn't change noticed a decline in catches. No doubt, if I had been using the tackle, I am using now I would have caught even more fish.

Q What is the most important advice for anyone starting sea angling?

RT: Speak to the staff in your local tackle shops to obtain advice on the best venues in your area to catch the species currently inshore. More importantly, ask what state of the tide you need to fish. I still meet a lot of anglers turning up at venues as I am leaving, which means they have missed the prime fishing time. Joining a local fishing club is a great way for an angler to learn, to get advice and find out how to fish local marks. Again, I would say keep your rigs simple and don't overcomplicate things.



Roy has seen increased catches of bass



There has been an increase in smoothhounds

Q How has the club angling scene changed in South Wales?

RT: There has been a dramatic change. There used to be lots of successful clubs, but many folded. There are still excellent fishing clubs in South Wales with the two longest established being Newport & District Sea Anglers and Penarth Sea Anglers. There are newer clubs, such as South Wales Sea Anglers, Holton Road SAC and Caerau SAC, that fish a variety of venues. We've always had an excellent open match scene with the prestigious Seamaster event each year. We still have in excess of 100 anglers fishing most open competitions, but in the early days this used to exceed 1,000 at some venues. The Seamaster is still very successful and that's thanks to Steve Chadwick who has run it for several decades.

Q Do you think that fishing competitively at club level helped improve your angling skills?

RT: I know it is not for everyone, but I would not have caught the fish I have over the years had it not been for what I learned from fishing at club level and then travelling fishing competitions outside of my local area and abroad with the national team.

Q How many times a week do you fish and how do you maintain your enthusiasm when the fishing is poor?

RT: Work permitting, I fish three times a week on average, sometimes more if the fishing is particularly good. Anglers have got used to fishing for bigger fish on the South Wales coast, but those fish do not always show up. When the fishing is poor, I go for smaller species at closer range. I don't mind as long as I am catching.

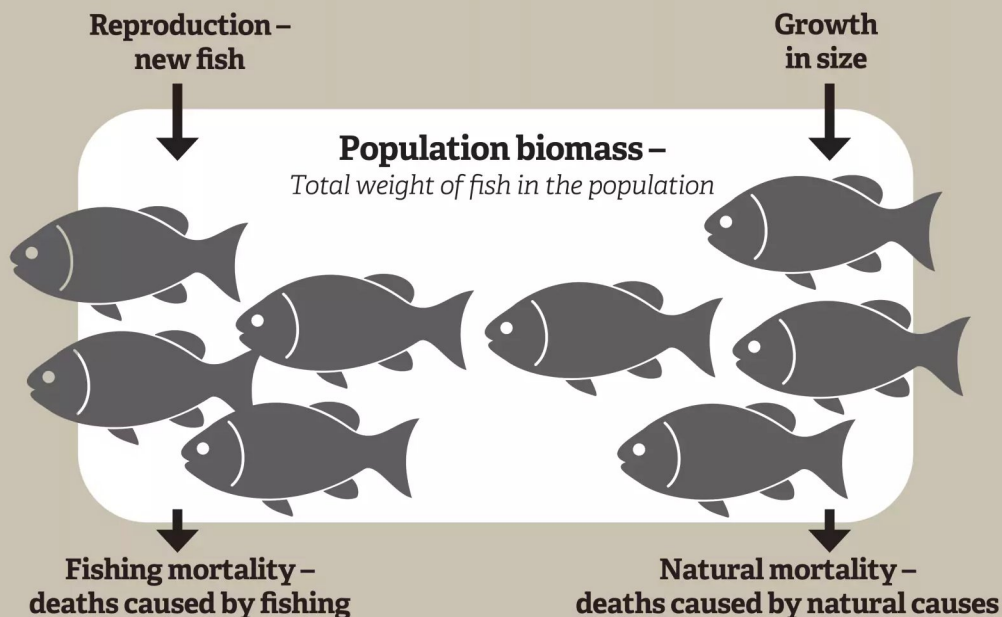
Q Do you keep records of your trips and, if so, do these help?

RT: It's something I have always done, including when I catch nothing. This has helped me, especially in competitions when I have started off using different tactics to others. It also helps me to avoid venues that are likely to be poor at certain times. ■

● = Penn Sea League

THIS IS OUR MOMENT

For stocks to be truly sustainable, they must be kept at a higher, safer level, says BASS campaigner David Curtis



THANKS TO THE EXCELLENT WORK of the Angling Trust, sea anglers are now recognised in law as stakeholders in UK fisheries. Sea angling must now be managed to achieve economic, social and employment benefits and provision has been made for funding for the development and promotion of sea angling.

It's an amazing achievement, but there is no time to relax. Following on from the new Fisheries Act, the Government is working on an overhaul of inshore fisheries management and we need to make sure the new system delivers what we want: more and bigger fish.

For years, our fisheries have been run to deliver a commercial fishing objective: Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). The needs and wants of sea anglers have been ignored. MSY aims to keep fish stocks at the size where they grow the fastest, with fish being caught at the same rate as the stock is growing, resulting in an equilibrium. In practice, this means a stock that is just 25 per cent to 35 per cent of what it would be if it were unfished.

In theory, the MSY approach is supposed to result in sustainable fisheries, but as we have seen with both the cod and bass stocks, it just doesn't work. For stocks to be truly sustainable, they must be kept at a higher, safer level. Taking bass as an example, they are slow-growing, late-maturing and the juveniles are highly vulnerable to poor climatic conditions. So the stock needs to be big enough to easily withstand a number of poor

years where relatively few fish grow and join the mature spawning stock. Fisheries managers need to respond quickly to consecutive poor years and reduce fishing pressure in a precautionary manner to keep the stock level high.

Managing stocks at higher levels has another benefit too: more big old fat fecund female fish (BOFFFFs). Researchers at Bangor University say these BOFFFFs contribute disproportionately to stock productivity, as they invest a larger proportion of their energy in reproduction, and for many species, large old female fish not only produce more eggs than smaller females, but also produce higher quality eggs and larvae which grow faster and can resist starvation. Having more of these BOFFFFs improves the resilience of the stock, since it can reproduce more quickly.

EASY MISTAKE

But a higher stock level is not just about protecting stocks (although that is vitally important), it means more and bigger fish and so fewer blanks and more productive sessions. It's easy to make the mistake of thinking that the poor quality of our inshore fisheries is how it has always been, but the truth is that commercial over-fishing has hammered stocks and severely diminished the quality of our sea angling.

Chatting to older fishermen can be a real eye-opener. I was recently told that in Cornwall vast aggregations of bass used to

arrive on the north coast of Cornwall (from Wales, the tagging showed), and most coves from St Ives to Pendeen would frequently produce 20 to 60 bass a tide for a competent angler. And in 1982, a commercial hand-liner called Richard Ede landed 108 bass in one night fishing off the south coast. The catch weighed 44.5 stone (623lb) which is an average of 5.7lb per fish. The following spring tide produced a night session with 30 bass, 19 of which were double-figure fish, with the smallest just over 7lb. The fisherman who told me about Richard's catches recalls one trip where he caught 28 bass with an average weight of 10lb 8oz.

We can experience this quality of fishing again, if we all come together and pressure the Government to target more and bigger fish and an abundant stock, instead of the feeble and inappropriate goal of MSY. We have started the discussion with the Government, so watch this space for updates and be ready to get your voice heard when we need your support. There are hundreds of thousands of sea anglers in the UK and we are now recognised stakeholders in our fisheries. We finally have a voice in the management of our inshore fisheries – let's use it. This is our moment, let's seize it. ■



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TIME MACHINE

A look back through the archives of Britain's biggest and best sea angling magazine...



APRIL



2011

■ A potential record spurdog was caught off the Kent coast by Justin McGregor, of Canterbury. His fish, weighing 24lb 5oz, easily beat the record of 21lb 3oz 7dr, but it was not weighed ashore so could not be accepted as a record. He was fishing on the Trinity Bank, out of Deal. The boat record now stands at 25lb 4oz with a fish caught in 2017.

■ Kayak angler Rob Appleby caught a 29lb cod while fishing off Watchet, Somerset, and added another of 14lb 8oz in the same session.

■ A prototype lure produced a 27lb 10z pollack for Barry James, of Plymouth, Devon, while fishing on the local boat Happy Days, skippered by Aaron Lidstone. Earlier in the session he caught a 22-pounder to give him two 'twenties' on the same day.

■ Not many cod anglers land two double-figure fish from the shore, but Phil Prestidge, from Poole, Dorset, did it in the space of two weeks. First he caught a 20-pounder from Chesil Beach and on his next day off caught another of 15lb 6oz.

■ A charter boat out of Newhaven, East Sussex, produced cod of 26lb 8oz and 27lb for Tom James, from Surrey, and Neil Glazier, from Hertfordshire. They were fishing on Dave Elliott's Ocean Warrior 3.

2001

■ One of the biggest cod of the winter from The Needles, Isle of Wight, fell to Tony Hobbs. The angler from Horley, Surrey, caught the 30lb 4oz fish while fishing on Roger Bayzand's Sundance, out of Lymington, Hampshire. The same boat produced a 22lb cod for John Iron, of Dartford, Kent. Best cod of the winter had been a 35-pounder for Andy Gunn, of Woolston, Hants.

■ Robert Boon, a barman from Watcombe, South Devon, caught an 18lb 5oz cod on a squid bait while shore fishing at Minehead, Somerset.

■ A potential Welsh record for a shore-caught ling slipped through the net because the captor didn't realise its significance at first. Nigel Edwards, of Llandudno, Conwy, was conger fishing at Amlwch, Anglesey, when he caught a fish weighing 10lb. Later when told it might be a record, it weighed 8lb 12oz 7dr, just short of Keith Skipper's 9lb 8dr record.

■ Charter skipper Mike Cottingham caught and released a potential British record undulate ray of 21lb 8oz. The skipper of Challenger, out of Lymington, Hampshire, had a no kill conservation policy for rays, so the specimen was weighed on board, witnessed and returned alive. He was fishing for cod just south of The Needles, Isle of Wight. The big undulate would have replaced the record of 21lb 4oz 8dr, which in 2016 was beaten by a fish of 22lb 13oz.

■ A Channel Islands' record that stood for 24 years was broken by an angler on only his second wreck fishing trip. Paul Berry, from Guernsey, was fishing the west coast of the island on Roger Berry's High Rider when he caught the 25lb 12oz pollack, beating the existing best of 22lb.

■ Steve Morgan, from South Wales, caught a personal best pollack of 22lb 8oz while fishing out of Dartmouth, Devon. He was on a Six Bells SAC trip on Dave Harrison's charter boat Gemini.

1991

■ A Newport charter skipper boated a 44lb cod half a mile off Stout Point. Charles Debaene was fishing on his boat Lady Hamilton when he caught it on a rag and squid bait.

■ A last-minute decision to go shore fishing paid off for Rodney Glover, of Bideford, Devon, when he caught a

23lb 7oz 8dr cod on lug and whole squid at Clovelly beach, North Devon.

■ An evening session at Durdle Door beach in Dorset resulted in Derek Spear landing an 18lb cod on a squid bait.

■ A Jersey-Alderney challenge match produced a Channel Islands shore-caught record conger eel of 61lb. Mark Hill, of Jersey Rodbenders, was fishing at Alderney Breakwater when he hooked the big eel. The fish beat the existing record by 1lb, but was 5lb 8oz short of the British best at the time. The current record of 68lb 8oz was caught in 1992 by Martin Larkin at Plymouth.

■ Shaun Lee bagged himself a club record when he caught a 49lb 6oz conger eel from the popular Dragon's Teeth mark on Chesil Beach, Dorset. Shaun, a member of Dorchester SAC, caught it on a ragworm and squid combination.

1981

■ The British record boat-caught whiting was about to soar after Neil Croft caught a 6lb 12oz fish during a club trip off Cornwall. The fish, which was eight ounces heavier than the existing best, was caught on a strip of mackerel during a Culdrose AS outing. The fish was weighed at Vic Strike's Porthleven tackle shop – the sixth British record breaker to grace the shop's scales.

■ The National Federation of Sea Anglers had announced the creation of an Aid to Angling Fund to be used to protect the interests of sea angling.

■ Fish of the month was won with the biggest cod caught in the North West, a 42lb fish boated by Mark Miller, of Fleetwood, Lancs, while fishing out of his home port. Runners-up were Gareth Fisher, from Newport, South Wales, with a 49lb ling and 27lb coalfish boated off Plymouth, Devon, and Chris Ellicott, of Plymouth, with a 31lb 12oz coalfish from an English Channel wreck.



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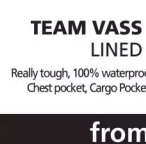
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